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FAILED FEMINISMS? INACTIVE RHETORIC AND THE  
ETHOS OF EARLY WOMEN WRITERS'  
DEFENSES OF WOMEN

by

Debra A. Combs

A Dissertation Submitted to  
the Faculty of The Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
in Partial Fulfillment  
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Doctor of Philosophy

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Approved by

  
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APPROVAL PAGE

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The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze the ethos of deeply marginalized writers. The writers selected for analysis in this project, Christine de Pizan, Jane Anger, Rachel Speght, Ester Sowernam, and Constantia Munda, all implicitly engage their marginalizations in their writings. All of them are late medieval or early modern women who wrote defenses of women within their patriarchal context. Despite differences of class, country and century, these women resemble each other because they wrote such defenses without any well-known, secular precedents for their arguments. Christine de Pizan wrote before Jane Anger, and Anger wrote before Speght, yet the texts of the earlier writers were unknown to the later ones, which leaves each of them without direct precedent for either their arguments or their act of writing as women. This dissertation explores the nature of the ethos appeals these women used given the difficulties of their rhetorical situations.

The methodology used in this dissertation is informed by rhetorical studies, feminism, and historiography. Each of these writers' texts is analyzed for the use of ethos appeals within the context of the writers' gender roles and their historical period. The study has two sections: the first delineates a generalization about the ethos appeals in Christine de Pizan's texts, while the second uses that generalization to analyze the work of the other women writers discussed here. The analysis primarily considers whether these ethos appeals are fundamentally similar given the writers' similar rhetorical situations.

The resulting study indicates that there were such fundamental similarities among the ethos appeals of these writers. In particular, the study

posits that these writers' ethos appeals represent a dynamic interplay among their audience's expectations of them, their personal reputations, and their style. Though the study does not attempt to construct a theory of ethos, the dissertation does call for further study into the nature and function of ethos appeals of other kinds of deeply marginalized writers.

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## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation I will be discussing the works of several early modern women writers: Christine de Pizan (1364-1430?), Jane Anger (c. 1587), Rachel Speght (c.1617-1621), Ester Sowernam (c.1617), and Constantia Munda (c.1617). My discussion would seem to affirm an argument made by Joan Kelly several decades ago:

New work is now appearing that will give a fuller sense of the richness, coherence, and continuity of early feminist thought....I hope to demonstrate a solid, four-hundred-year-old tradition of women thinking about women and sexual politics in European society before the French Revolution. (Kelly 66)

Kelly's article is a persuasive demonstration of the repeated flourishing of pro-women thought, yet, as Gerda Lerner has recently proven, Kelly's notion of a continuing, recognized tradition of women's writing and thought is not supported by the evidence. Certainly, many early women did know of some of their predecessors, yet just as often women's writing was forgotten, forcing many women to be effectively the "first" secular woman writer. Rachel Speght, for instance, appears to have been completely unaware of Anger's work, and neither seems to have known of Christine. I choose to discuss these writers in part because they lack any direct, well recognized secular precedents--each engaged in the rhetorical situation of being "first" in a community that, in general, assumed that their speaking or writing indicated the contamination of their souls. Without a tradition of women's writings as a context for their own

writings, and without a rhetorical tradition which justified their speech, these women were extraordinarily marginalized. How they presented their voices, then, proves interesting and is the topic of my study.

Little is known of the lives of these marginalized writers. Among them, Christine de Pizan is the most well known now, and her life is the most fully researched. Born in Italy, daughter of a scholar and civil servant, she and her family moved to France when she was only three, and she grew into a loyal subject of the French crown. She married, happily, and began a family. Then, in less than a year, she lost her father and her husband and found herself nearly destitute with her mother and her children to support. For many years she was involved in several lawsuits in her attempt to regain money owed to her husband's estate. Though she mentions learning to read and write from her father, there is no certain evidence of how she became involved in the current book trade. Yet between being a copyist and becoming a poet, she became France's first "professional" writer. My discussion of her works is limited to some of the prose treatises she wrote as she began to present herself as not only a celebrated poet, but as a scholar as well. As a poet, and as a novelty in being a skilled female poet, she had established for herself a reputation as an artist. Yet, as I will discuss in my first chapter, she still faced resistance in entering the no-women's-land of scholarship and criticism.

We know much less about the lives of the other women I discuss. Jane Anger's work appeared in 1587 in response to a treatise that never went to print; other than the existence of her text, there is no evidence of who she was. Like Anger, we have no information on the identities of Ester Sowernam or Constantia Munda, other than their participation in the controversy surrounding Swetnam's *Arraignment of... Women* (1617). We do have a bit of background



on the first woman writer to refute Swetnam, Rachel Speght. Not yet twenty years old when she wrote her pamphlet, Speght was a minister's daughter trained in English and at least some Latin. Five years after writing the pamphlet which I will discuss, *A Mousell for Melastomus* (1617), she composed a religious allegory in verse, *Morality's Memorandum* (1621) in response to her mother's death. Simon Shepherd discovered records indicating that Speght married late in the summer of 1621 to one William Procter, and began her family (Shepherd 58). She appears to have stopped writing to take up the duties of a wife and mother. There is no evidence that these women were aware of their predecessors, excepting Sowernam and Munda who knew Speght's work, and so their writings and their rhetoric provide potential insights into the histories of women and of rhetoric.

Historicizing scholarship in rhetoric and in women's studies is becoming an academic commonplace, if not a virtual industry. The fields are, of course, contentious, and each includes several dominant, and less dominant, strains. This dissertation certainly is written within the contexts of feminism, new historicism, and rhetorical studies, yet in many ways I speak from, and about, several of those more marginalized assumptions and interests. Though my first section is on the changing ethos appeals in Christine de Pizan's writings, my interest in the Renaissance women pamphleteers, Jane Anger, Rachel Speght, Ester Sowernam, and Constantia Munda, can certainly be seen as delving into the obscure. Because my interests and my assumptions are unusual, I will need to justify several of my premises and explain the purpose of this dissertation, as well as present some background information.

Perhaps the most contentious of my positions derives from my uncomfortable relationship to "feminist" studies. As Nina Baym argues in "The

Madwoman and Her Languages: Why I Don't Do Feminist Literary Theory," there are two major strains in feminism--the "pluralists" and the "legalists."

Pluralists anticipate the unexpected, encourage diversity; legalists locate the correct position and marshal women within the ranks. As for recent literary theory, it is deeply legalist and judgmental. Infractions--the wrong theory, theoretical errors, or insouciant disregard for theoretical implications--are crimes. (Baym 154)

I will be committing several of those "crimes" in my argument--in particular, I will be rejecting outright the dominant strain of feminist historicizing of women's writing. In this position I am in good company; Margaret Ezell, in her study of feminist literary historiography, discusses several biases inherent in the dominant critical depiction of women's texts from before 1700:

Essentially... the earlier periods of women's literary history have been caught between seemingly conflicting perceptions. On the one hand, there is the assumption that women were silenced, that they did not write. On the other, there is the assumption that because of the literary practices followed or the forms used, the writings that were produced were not a legitimate part of the 'tradition' that 'blossomed' in the golden age of the nineteenth-century female novelist. (Ezell 58)

Most feminist literary histories celebrate women's writings from the 1800's until today as the birth of feminist literature, assuming that women's writings A) should be "feminist" in some fashion to be worthwhile in the canon of women's writings and B) should reflect a "uniform female response to life" (27). These assumptions result in a "tendency to judge the "feminism" of earlier generations as it meets our standards" (27). The dominant feminist historiography, then, is fundamentally ahistorical: it imposes modern notions of women's worth and women's writings onto other eras, which cannot, by definition, fulfill those expectations. This results in several problems for those who attempt to study

early women writers using an accurate understanding of their historical time. Commonly, even now, feminist scholars still express surprise that many women were even writing before Aphra Behn or these scholars believe that the early women writers were only “proto-feminists.” The surprise is derived, as Ezell argues, from the “potent myth of Judith Shakespeare: . . . society, this theory maintains, silenced women, and where it could not, it drove them mad . . .” (25). This myth is accompanied by many other stereotypes, all of which affirms a linear progression of women’s developing independence:

Here we see the types of female authors emerging: the illiterate medieval woman, the silent, docile Renaissance woman, the modest coterie Cavalier female, the independent professional Restoration playwright, the emerging female novelist, the mad Victorian, and the culmination in our own time’s self-conscious and self-critical pilgrim in search of female identity. (28-29)

Within this linear progression, women from before Mary Wollstonecraft are commonly defined as “proto-feminists.” Just as three of the most belittling words in the English language are “merely,” “only,” and “just,” the term “proto-feminists” condescendingly defines early women writers by what they are not (modern feminists) instead of by what they are (writers).

Unfortunately, this depiction of early women writers is exacerbated by the major anthologies of those writers--the most significant of which is, of course, the *Norton Anthology of Literature by Women (NALW)*. As Ezell notes, because *NALW* is probably the most commonly used anthology for teaching undergraduates, it is deeply disturbing “to both feminist literary historians and literary critics working in the pre-Romantic periods to discover that ‘the tradition in English’ of women’s literature before 1800 occupies only 172 pages out of 2390” (41). The anthology perpetuates the notion that, excepting a few,

extremely rare, women, early women either did not write, or did not write for an audience (41). Even the anthologies of women writers during the seventeenth century are little better because they “steadily maintain that women writing before the eighteenth century were rare and eccentric creatures, the exceptions, not the norm” (42). The anthologies of specifically early women writers, women from before 1700, undermine one stereotype, yet often these anthologies implicitly generate another stereotype--that only the noble woman could and did write:

The lower classes are routinely assumed to have been completely illiterate, which has blocked any perception of writings by groups of women such as the early Quakers from being considered as part of the tradition. Such assumptions have effectively silenced a significant group of female voices from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. (52-53)

By assuming that only the nobility had access to education, these anthologies silence the writings of middle-class women and select materials written primarily by noble women. The problems that Ezell has noted for feminist literary historiography play out in feminist rhetorical historiography, an issue that will be discussed at this year’s Conference of College Composition and Communication.

One of my “crimes” against feminism is my staunch refusal to accept the notion of women’s progressive development from an illiterate, silenced, and repressed medieval woman to the post-modern feminist. Another of my crimes is that I will steadfastly refuse to read “pro-women” writings as “feminist” or “proto-feminist” ones: I reject the implicit militancy of the dominant feminist theory that assumes that our notions of women’s worth and women’s nature correctly reflect women’s essential, universal, selves (Ezell 19 ff) and our notion that women’s concerns are best served in democratic societies. Many feminist

critics have struggled, for instance, over the “problem” of Christine de Pizan’s sincere monarchist beliefs--yet this problem is only a problem if one assumes that the Christine’s “feminist” philosophy must conflict with her country’s political structure. Yet by reading her works within her historical time, and allowing for a variety of pro-women beliefs, Christine’s loyalty to the crown becomes a non-issue. Two more of my crimes are indicated by my title--I will not be proving that early women’s writings were particularly successful, nor am I arguing that these pro-women writings were intended to change women’s political, economic, or legal status: hence I speak of “failed” feminisms and “inactive rhetoric.” Two of the writers I will discuss, Christine de Pizan and Rachel Speght, explicitly argue against political change. For many modern feminists, pro-women arguments are significant only in so far as the attempt, or do, change women’s economic, political, or legal status: yet for most early women writers, feminist activism is simply not a relevant touchstone for assessment.

My last crime against feminism may be something of a crime against rhetoric as well. Some rhetoricians see rhetoric as primarily a tool for persuading an audience to social and political action. This notion of rhetoric derives from one way of seeing the classical notion of rhetoric as public speaking in the forum, and this kind of rhetoric is greatly valued by many feminists. The women I will be studying in this dissertation employ what I am calling an “inactive rhetoric” which aims more at changing beliefs, but not necessarily at inspiring action, much like Socrates’s third speech in the *Phaedrus* employs persuasion about beliefs. I may also commit another crime against rhetoric because I assume that these women writers are not concerned with the theory of rhetoric--I make no arguments that Christine was influenced by St. Augustine, for instance, nor do I consider the influence of Ramus on the

Swetnam controversy. Though I do assume that these women were exposed to rhetoric, as I presume that rhetoric permeates any culture, I do not expect them to have closely studied the then current theory. Even in my last chapter on Christine's work, where I argue that she outlines a "rhetoric" for women, I do not argue that she acknowledges or responds to the theory of rhetoric.

My notion of ethos may be my most unusual position; from exploring the ethos of these women I have concluded that ethos is dynamic. I began my reading of these women's writings assuming that ethos was the "character of the speaker," and, like many modern rhetoricians, I conflated "the Ciceronian definition of ethos as appearance with the Aristotelian view of ethos as a choice made in response to particular audiences" (Johnson 113). Aristotle asserts that one's ethos should manifest the virtues affirmed in one's community. Yet that definition of ethos begs two questions concerning virtue: What sorts of speakers can manifest the virtues that a culture affirms, and what happens when a speaker is not one whom the audience expects to manifest those virtues? As Maureen Quilligan notes, "In order to write successfully, one needs not only the authority necessary to write, but also the authority necessary to be heard. One needs to have access to--if not to be located directly within--the center of dominant power" (Quilligan xiv). For all of Aristotle's description of the good speaker as one with "good sense, good moral character, and goodwill" (II.1, 1378.5), he consistently assumes that his students will have the authority to enter the assembly, and that all rhetors are men. The virtues that these men are expected to enact, not surprisingly, are almost all typically gendered as male: the audience's stereotypes of those virtues are always already established. Aristotle's advice to these elite speakers fundamentally focuses on refining, and not truly creating, their ethos. Aristotle does not consider the possibility of a

speaker who is not already a member of the political and social elite, nor does Aristotle consider marginalized speaking-positions. I found that his definition could not account for the particular ethos problems exhibited in writings by extremely marginalized, if not nearly silenced, speakers. For such writers ethos can not fit the standard, Aristotelian definition. Renaissance women, for instance, are doubly bound within the marginalized speaking-positions that Aristotle fails to consider: as women speakers they were ideologically predefined as unacceptable public speakers within their community, and the womanly virtues which they were expected to enact consistently undermined their credibility as writers.

Aristotle limits ethos to "what the speaker says" (25, 1.2). Yet for many speakers, their ethos appeals are predetermined by what an audience expects of them: not surprising, Cicero expanded the definition "of ethos to include the speaker's reputation" (Connors 185). "Reputation" represents the community's assessment of the speaker according to the speaker's past claims and current social and economic standing. For instance, a modern audience will expect Jesse Jackson to speak on particular subjects and will find him persuasive not only for what he says, but for who he is. Unlike the male speakers in a male dominated culture for whom Aristotle wrote, Renaissance women can not take the audience's assumptions about their reputations for granted: to persuade their audiences these women had to change the reputation patriarchy imposed on them because of their sex. This "reputation" and these women's ethos begin as virtually the same thing: in effect, for early women writers, ethos and the cultural stereotypes about women were interlocked. As Michael Halloran argues, ethos is "a mode of action" which simultaneously "articulates one's own being" and "situates oneself in a community by articulating standards of action"

(86). These early women writers had to purposefully situate themselves in relationship with their misogynist audience before they could be heard:

[T]he speaker (or writer) must understand *ethos* in order to create in his audience a strong and favorable impression of his own character. He does this in part by bringing to the rhetorical occasion a good reputation, but he must also manifest the proper character through the choices made in his speech...To have *ethos* is to manifest the virtues most valued by the culture to and for which one speaks--in Athens: justice, courage, temperance, magnificence, magnanimity, liberality, gentleness, prudence, wisdom. (Halloran 60)

Ethos is constructed as a tripartite relationship among speech, speaker, and community: the speaker must affirm the core beliefs of his audience through his choices in his speech, he must have a good personal reputation, and he must seem to belong to a group defined as worthy to be heard (meaning, for most cultures, that he must be a him).

I use this tripartite definition of ethos throughout this dissertation, yet I discovered that even this breakdown of the ethos appeal is too limited, for it assumes that women had significant influence over their audience's predetermined expectations of them. As I will discuss in my chapter on Christine and the *querelle de la Rose*, the cultural stereotypes about women justified ignoring, or rejecting, women's speech. For women, as for many deeply marginalized speakers in hostile discussions, the audience's expectations did not only limit what they were expected to say, as in my example with Jesse Jackson, those expectations virtually silenced them. I discovered that for these women the ethos appeal dynamically connects them with their audience: the audience judges women by the stereotypes about them, yet the women attempt to construct both their personal reputations and their styles to present themselves as trustworthy, complex personalities, as more



than just stereotypes, in order to disprove those stereotypes. I will not be concluding that this notion of ethos can be readily or directly applied to modern situations, for that would be another failure to understand rhetoric within the confines of its historical time. Yet I do suspect that this notion of a dynamic ethos is potentially analogous to other ethos appeals in other situations.

This dissertation, then, looks closely at two different, early debates about women in which women participated in order to delineate the function of ethos in such situations. I am not attempting to construct a theory of the nature and function of ethos, though certainly I touch on, and am influenced by, theory. There is no theoretically essential reason for studying these particular women's ethos over studying women in other rhetorical and historical contexts. Instead, I am looking at how ethos functioned for these Renaissance women's pro-women writings as more a historical study than a theoretical one. Concurrently, I do not want my working definition of ethos to be appropriated as a theory for it has not been tested beyond the context of these women's writings. I am not looking, then, at how these women's use of rhetoric, and sometimes thoughts about rhetoric, illuminate the theory of rhetoric. Though such a study would be a reasonable sequel to this study, the purpose of this dissertation is to delve into the ethos of these women writers. In my first section I narrate the changes in Christine de Pizan's ethos and her thoughts about ethos, beginning with her repeated failure to control the definition of women's ethos during in the *querelle* and ending with her directions to women for constructing a good ethos in the *Trésor*. In this section I note how Christine's works indicate an awareness of the three parts of ethos--stereotypes, personal reputation, and style. In the second section I analyze how those parts of ethos illuminate the English Renaissance women pamphleteers's writings, in effect testing to see if the tripartite notion of

ethos can lend worthwhile insight into a similar, yet still quite different, rhetorical situation. The structure of the dissertation is, then, admittedly a little jarring, for the first section is a chronological study, and so has an underlying narrative pulse. Yet the second section is an analysis, with each of the three chapters structured around one of the parts of ethos that I derive from my reading of Christine. My intention is to illuminate the ethos appeals available to these Renaissance women.

Despite the conclusive tone of that last sentence, it is appropriate for me to include here some background information on Renaissance stereotypes about women. This information is, admittedly, biased towards explicating the English stereotypes, for I will be able to derive a much more specific set of expectations about women from the critiques Christine received during the *querelle*. Most Renaissance stereotypes of women generalized women as "Woman," unlike men who were defined either as individuals or according to some professional, social or ethnic group (Henderson and McManus 3). Women in the Renaissance were a "distinct group within the discourse of patriarchal theory," despite differences in their economic or social classes (Lucas ix). As Carol Thomas Neely explains, these definitions of women constructed the culture's expectations of women's proper gender roles.

In theological discourse, as in medical, women, Eve's daughters all, are both strictly subordinated and potentially dangerous....By theology ... and by law as well, women are defined and contained through their place in the marriage paradigm--as maidens, wives, or widows. These roles are in turn defined by the mode of sexuality appropriate to them: virginity for maidens, marital chastity for wives, and abstinence for widows...:women's economic, legal, and cultural status in relation to men, rest[s] on male constructions of women's sexuality and sexual roles. The reiterated admonitions in the prescriptive literature [is] that women should be chaste, modest, silent and obedient. (Neely 214)

Theologically and legally, “good” women are constrained by stereotypes of their “proper” behaviors, yet women’s public speaking violates those gender roles and implicitly rejects their sexual roles.

“Chastity” is constructed as a virtue in response to a Renaissance notion of women’s “potentially disruptive sexuality” (Henderson and McManus 59), which was seen as “inexhaustible” (Henderson and McManus 56). The virtue of “chastity,” unlike the same virtue in the Victorian period, was not “attributed to a low level of sexual desire” but was seen as a “conscious and virtuous self-control” (Henderson and McManus 59). Breaking the gender roles of silence and modesty in order to speak publicly implied a dangerous rebellion against sexual taboos: Renaissance women’s repression of their sexuality became the basis of their virtue. Because virtuous Renaissance women often were presumed to have controlled the wild energies of their passion, they were sometimes depicted as morally superior to men. The stereotypes of virtuous women extolled their “long suffering, humility, patience, compassion, and public charity,” as well as their religious devotion (MacLean 20). These stereotypes were justified, in part, from theological and “medical” or scientific treatises (Neely 214), which Jordan further explains:

During the first half of the sixteenth century, defenses of women exhibited a pervasive concern with doctrine that derived its authority from what was held to be divine and natural laws. Theoretically distinct--divine law recorded in Scripture, natural law in philosophy, especially in that of Aristotle--the two kinds of law merged in thinking that justified existing social and political practices. (Jordan 65)

Though the resulting stereotypes of women derived from these two different kinds of law were complimentary, the derivations were from significantly different sources. Because these sources did differ, they justified slightly

different expectations about women. In turn, the pro-women writers responded to the expectations differently.

Technically, divine law depicted women as men's spiritual equals: "God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1.27). Renaissance commentators typically read this verse as presenting men's and women's souls as spiritually equivalent (Jordan 64). In particular, both women and men were seen as having intelligence by the grace of God because both are created in the image of God (MacLean 20). But this spiritual and intellectual equivalence did not signify women's social or political equality. Instead women were defined as socially inferior to men through the dominant reading of the Jahwist creation story:

Because woman was initially made from the side of man to be his *helper*, and afterward, in her postlapsarian state, ordered to be his *subject*, she was doubly under-privileged. The manner of her creation revealed her ontological inferiority, her punishment after the loss of paradise her *political* subordination in historical time. Both limitations are features of patriarchalism and the gross distinction between the worth of men-in-themselves and women-in-themselves. (Jordan 22)

These conflicting definitions of women's ontological status reflect a conflict within the period--in some circumstances women could define themselves as spiritually equal to men, and could, therefore, debate men about religion (Jordan 134). Yet, even on the occasions that women's ontological status was affirmed, women's political status--her status within the confines of historical time--was consistently defined as subordinate to men's status. Particularly, women were defined by English civil law according to their sexual relations to men--they were either married or available to be married (MacLean 75). As married women, they were legally bound to the authority of their husbands, who

could, for instance, forbid them from pressing legal suits and who could beat them (MacLean 76). The paradigm of marriage, of women as maid/wife/widow, significantly shaped both their civil status and men's expectations of women (MacLean 26).

These legal and theological definitions of women shaped their gender roles. As Jardine notes, "the 'willingness' of the wife's acceptance...of [her] submission, obedience and silence, is derived from texts" throughout the Bible. For instance, Jardine continues, Proverbs 31.10-29 provide an "alphabet catalog of wifely virtues...[which was] much cited in the Renaissance" (41). The behaviors expected of the worthy wife in the passage mainly celebrate her servitude:

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.  
 They hear her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have  
 no need of spoil.  
 She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.  
 She seekth wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.  
 She is like the merchant's ships; she bringeth her food from afar....  
 She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff...  
 She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household  
 are clothed in scarlet....  
 She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the  
 bread of idleness.  
 (Proverbs 31.10-29, quoted in Jardine 41, my ellipses)

In Proverbs such a wife is called "blessed" and virtuous, but the virtue she is permitted is little more than submissive servitude and hard work. Her life is thoroughly constrained by her gender role, and her virtue does not allow space for an individuated self, let alone an individual ethos. Her ontological status derived from theology becomes not only her political status, but her matrimonial one as well. This status becomes the "self" she is expected to present to her

community, and that self is the same self as all “good” women, making individual women into idealized “Woman.”

The same ontological status for women was also derived from classical sources, especially Aristotle, who was seen as an authority on the physical world and was much quoted in “medical” (Neely 214) and scientific treatises on women (MacLean 31). Underlying these arguments was the assumption that the natural order was hierarchical, “... and that such a hierarchy is justified by virtue of the nature of the creatures it ranks--woman is generally weaker than men in her creaturely and temporal aspect; she is genetically imperfect in relation to him in her biological and political nature” (Jordan 134). To Aristotle, women were fundamentally “colder and moister than men and hence weaker, stupider, less courageous, and less complete” (Neely 213), which was caused “by the lack of heat in her generation” (MacLean 31). Within this hierarchy, women’s physical nature placed her beneath men and defined her as unable to perform complex tasks.<sup>1</sup> Women were seen “radically unfit for any activity that was not, in essence, a response to a signal or command from a man” (Jordan 32). Unlike the theological definitions of women’s intelligence, biologically women, like slaves and children, were seen as intellectually subordinate to, and characteristically less excellent than, men. In Aristotle’s formulation of women’s deliberative faculty her intellectual ability is hampered by her lack of authority.

For the slave has no deliberative faculty at all; the woman has, but it is without authority, and the child has, but it is immature. So it must necessarily be supposed to be with the excellences of character also; all should partake of them, but only in such manner and degree as is required by each for the fulfillment of his function....The temperance of a man and of a woman, or the courage and justice of a man and of a woman, are not, as Socrates maintained, the same; the courage of a

<sup>1</sup> Speght blatantly rejects this reading of women’s biological nature, claiming that “as the temperature of man’s body is excellent, so is woman’s” (Speght 69). There was also, possibly, a pro-women movement in the medical field at the time, see MacLean 29 and following.

man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying.  
 ([*Politics* I.13;1260a1] cited in Jordan 32)

In Aristotle's estimation, women categorically lack the virtues needed for a persuasive ethos. Women's inferior virtues derive from her physiological resemblance to other female animals according to Aristotle:

In all genera in which the distinction of male and female is found, Nature makes a similar differentiation in the mental characteristics of the sexes. The differentiation is the most obvious in the case of human kind and in that of the larger animals and viviparous quadrupeds... The female is less spirited than the male,...softer in disposition, more mischievous, less simple, more impulsive, and more attentive to the nurture of the young...Woman is more compassionate than man, more easily moved to tears, at the same time more jealous, more querulous, more apt to scold and strike. She is, furthermore, more prone to despondency and less hopeful than the man, more void of shame or self-respect, more false of speech, more deceptive, and of more retentive memory. She is also more wakeful, more shrinking, more difficult to rouse to action, and requires a small quantity of nutriment. ([*Historia animalium* IX.i. ] quoted in Jardine 40)

Women's inferiority is "natural" to her, and to all creatures of her sex, not only in deliberation but in all of her being.

None of her characteristics above resemble the list of "virtues" Aristotle requires of the good speaker: justice, courage, temperance, magnificence, prudence, wisdom. This definition of women's nature, as Jordan explains, "eventually dictate[s] social functions that follow rules of decorum determined by character" (Jordan 32). A woman's essential character shapes, for Aristotle, the decorum of her social behaviors, as Jordan explains:

A man would be thought a coward if he had no more courage than a courageous woman, and a woman would be thought loquacious if she imposed no more restraint on her conversation than the good man; and indeed their part in the management of the household is different, for the duty of the one is to acquire, and of the other to preserve. (*Politics*

3.4; 1277b1...) If these norm are not observed, and a woman rules a man, even within a household, she abuses political propriety and, ultimately, biological nature. (Jordan 32)

These stereotypes of women's worth and behavior were not monolithic (Neely 215), but they were extensive, shaping the laws under which women lived (Jordan 65, 66-67), the conduct books they read (Bornstein x-xi, for instance), and the expectations an audience would have about a woman rhetor.

As Bornstein describes the *Northern Mother's Blessing*, this conduct book's implied author, a mother speaking to her daughter, presents a synthesis of the stereotypes of a virtuous wife's behavior:

The ideal of behavior present in the work is one of Christian morality and bourgeois prudence. The mother advises her daughter regarding religion, morality, speech, demeanor, dress, household management, bringing up of children, and behavior with men. She is told to attend church regularly, and to pay tithes and give alms willingly. The moral virtues that are stressed are piety, humility, obedience, temperance, and prudence. Meekness and obedience are particularly emphasized in regard to her relationship with her husband. Her speech should be mild and gentle, and she should not talk too much. Laughing and jesting are frowned upon....(Bornstein x-xi)

This description of women's appropriate conduct depicts women as naturally and essentially inferior to men, as servants of men, and as stereotypes of themselves as a typical, good Woman, despite differences of class, ethnicity, or ability. Stereotypes of women became the basis of almost all women's ethos for they predetermined the virtues women may emulate.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, in both the court and the middle-class community, women's ontological status was constructed along the lines of her stereotypical vices as well as defined from her virtues. These vices were derived from medieval and

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<sup>2</sup> One of the obvious exceptions was Queen Elizabeth, who could appeal to the notion of the King's two bodies to construct her ethos as a man, even though she was biologically female.



classical sources--Ovid and Seneca, for instance, present female "monstrosity" (Jardine 93), and the medieval clerical misogyny included "the old commonplaces, that women were proud, lecherous, and domineering, vain of appearance and empty of head; [that women were] foolish virgins, shrewish wives, and lustful widows..." (Clark 177). Of these vices, as Howard Bloch has noted, one of the "cornerstones" is "the link of the feminine to the seductions and the ruses of speech" (Bloch 14). This "topos of the garrulous female," which is undoubtedly "intended to silence women," stereotypes women's voices as especially unworthy (Bloch 15-17). Unlike the notion of the good woman--who all shared the same virtues--evil women came in several forms. As temptresses, as shrews, and as other types, all of these evil women were stereotyped according to their faults:

Female faults and vices fit into several categories, those resulting from pride, from lechery, or from the desire to emulate men, and a general group created by the traditional spirit of misogyny that had prevailed in popular literature since medieval times. This last group consists of faults rather than vices, traits such as obstinacy, contrariness, inconstancy, spite, ill-temper, cunning, deceit, love of gossip, and inability to keep secrets....Most real vices were associated with pride or lechery; in particular, pride accounted for over-delicacy and the sinful desire to ape women of higher social status, while lechery lead to dissimulation, the use of cosmetics, and the love of fine clothes. (Clark 177-178)

The primary vices--vanity, garrulousness, and lust (see also Lucas 10 and Jordan 137)--were, as Clark points out, connected: each sin was perceived as causing or leading to the other sins. As MacLean argues

When this condemnation of *mala mulier* (sometimes *meretrix*) is combined with praise of the *bona mulier*, there seems to be a suggestion that in the case of woman there is no moderation or middle ground of vice and virtue. (MacLean 16)

The polarity of women's virtues and vices was derived from patriarchal constructions of her sexuality.<sup>3</sup> As the good woman was depicted as being in chaste control of her sexual desire, the evil woman was perceived as sexually aware, which branded her as an "Eve/Magdalene as opposed to Mary" (Jardine 77) even if a woman never acted on that desire. Eventually all women were expected to fall into the trap of their own sexual desires despite the virtues of any individual woman: the patriarchal constructions of women "reduced her to an exclusively sexual being, existing solely to fulfill [her sexual] functions" (Rogers 22).

Though Renaissance stereotypes of early women constrained their behaviors, modern stereotypes about these "docile" women have limited our readings of their rhetoric--particularly the use of the humility topos. Modern feminists have, with reason, argued that the humility topos was caused by women's fear of breaking the rules of gender decorum and their fear of being attacked as immodest women. Yet, like the clerkly apologia, the Renaissance woman's use of the humility topos functioned more as an attempt to construct a personal reputation than a fearful reaction to criticism. A woman's reputation, as Shepherd argues, was constructed for her by her community as much as it was shaped by her own behaviors and style of speaking. A woman's self-esteem and her marriage prospects--which usually limited her economic and social status--were regularly effected, even defined, by her reputation. As Shepherd explains:

Not only was she socially and economically controlled, she was trapped by language, a victim of talk: imprisoned by patriarchal discourse. What follows from this is that a woman's style of life and her sense of herself

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<sup>3</sup> I am not as convinced as MacLean is that the stereotypes were truly bipolar. I will discuss the "virago" stereotype in the second section. I do accept that the stereotype connotes bipolar expectations of most women within their feminine gender roles.

could be altered whenever what was said about her changed....In grasping this, we go some way towards exploring seventeenth-century women's attacks on slander and slanderers. To invent scandal about woman, or to falsely accuse them may be a male joke but it destroys the life of the woman.... Our pamphleteers are answering back as women. They are stepping, very consciously, into a risky and dangerous world. (Shepherd 12)

Pro-women attacks on male railers against women actively attempt to control the "talk" that delineated a woman's reputation and shaped her lifestyle and self-esteem. Concurrently, the "humility topos" represented women's subtle attempt to regain control over their own reputation: sometimes the humility topos is even used to reconstruct the stereotypes that are applied to women. By highlighting their modesty, the woman using the humility topos speaks of, and makes, her own reputation by calling herself modest. Such women writers seem to passively accept the stereotypical expectation that a good woman is (virtually always) a silent one while they justify their own breaches of decorum. When successful, the woman writers's reputations are derived primarily not from stereotypes about them based on their sex, but from the women's personal reputations as exhibited in their style. When unsuccessful, as in Christine's letters in the *querelle*, the humility topos can be read as admission of guilt for having unjustly broached the gender decorum of modest silence. As I will discuss in the first chapter, Christine's failure to construct her own ethos, especially her failure to define her own personal reputation, permitted the Cols's condescending and sometimes cruelly dismissive attacks on her character.

In the first chapter I discuss Christine's failure to delineate her own voice in order to open up the problem of constructing an appropriate ethos. In the next two chapters I discuss how in the *Cité des dames* and the *Trésor de la cité*

*des dames* she reconstructs women's ontological status and guides women in appropriating that new ontological status in order to persuade. Together, the two books promote women's use of persuasion--first by creating cultural spaces for their speech and then by establishing a rhetoric for that speech. In these texts, I believe, Christine responds to her experiences in the *querelle* and attempts to correct women's problematical ethos position. These three defenses of women--the defense of women against literary misogyny in the *querelle*, the recreation and defense of worthy women's ontological status in the *Cité*, and the defense of, and instructions in, women's speech in the *Trésor*--all indicate that women's ethos appeals are constructed in tandem with her community. This discussion particularly leads me to see ethos as tripartited--as the audience's expectations, as the speaker's personal reputation, and as the style with which the rhetor expresses herself--and I appropriate these parts in order to discuss the Renaissance Englishwomen who were, like Christine, extraordinarily marginalized. In my fourth chapter I discuss the audience's likely expectations of the pamphleteers and I assess the stereotypes that their discourse community held about women generally. From that context, I derive the audience's likely expectations of these female writer's ethos. In the fifth chapter I discuss the pamphleteers's use of the reputation of the pamphlet form, in conjunction with the stereotypes of the shrew and the virile woman, to analyze the personal reputations these women attempt to construct. In the sixth chapter, I discuss the style with which they present their voices in order to show their characters as more than merely the audience's stereotypes about them. As such, this study presumes that there is no direct relationship among these groups of women, but instead it looks at similar dynamics of their constructions in their ethos.

## CHAPTER II

FAILED ETHOS: CHRISTINE DE PIZAN AND THE *QUERELLE DE LA ROSE*

Christine's participation in the *querelle de la Rose* represented yet another change in her complicated life.<sup>1</sup> She had already suffered deep emotional and financial loss following the deaths of her husband and father, and had spent several years attempting to regain money owed her and to establish herself as a poet. Her entrance into the debate marked not only her first major polemical writing in prose, but also a shifting of her reputation from a court poet, and a court novelty because she was a woman poet, to a scholar. The *querelle de la Rose* is about Jean de Meun's section of the *Roman de la Rose*, and, as such, it is a literary, aesthetic and moral debate about this text's beneficial or detrimental effects on women. Meun's text itself is not, despite Joan Kelly's suggestions to the contrary, primarily about women. Yet the debate about the *Roman de la Rose* hashes out how women's ontological status is shaped in, and by, a masterpiece of medieval France's literary canon. In the debate, the participants were arguing, in often the most heated sense of the word, both the status of women and the legitimacy of a woman's participation in the debate. The *querelle*, then, engages not only issues of women's worth, but of rhetoric as a masculinized mode of expression.

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<sup>1</sup> I need to make a note about Christine de Pizan's name, which has caused some debate: critics refer to her as Christine, as Christine de Pisan, as Pisan, and as Pizan. The "Pisan" spelling derives from an attempt to "correct" the spelling of her name; this correction assumed that "Pizan" was a reference to the Pisa area of Italy, which it is not. This correction became common decades ago, and has been adopted by the Library of Congress. Yet the original "Pizan" spelling has since been recognized as the more accurate, and so I use it in my citations. Another correction has been to refer to Christine by her last name, like other major authors. This correction, however, has not become common in Christine studies, so in the text of my work I will refer to her by her first name.

Christine's participation in the debate, her "feminist" literary analysis of the Rose and her status as a woman were intertwined: she repeatedly defends both her beliefs and her act of expressing those beliefs:

And do not believe or let anyone else think, dear Sir, that I have written this defense, out of feminine bias, merely because I am a woman. For, assuredly, my motive is simply to uphold the pure truth, since I know by experience that the truth is completely contrary to those things I am denying. And it is precisely because I am a woman that I can speak better in this matter than one who has not had the experience, since he speaks only by conjecture and by chance.

(Christine de Pizan, quoted in Baird and Kane, 53<sup>2</sup>)

Christine bases her ethos on her experience as a woman, instead of basing it on arguments from various religious, intellectual, historical or political authorities, though she does use those authorities as well. In this debate she uses her own gender to redefine the ontological status of women: by trying to show that she is more than the typical woman, she attempts to undermine the accuracy of the stereotypes about women.

While Christine's arguments invite discussion about her "feminism," Christine's "feminism" also invites questions about her rhetoric. Christine's motive, as she repeatedly asserts, is to express the "truth" as she has experienced it as a woman. Concurrently, she repeatedly asserts that her gendered, lived experience is more persuasive than her male, often celibate, opponents's assumed authority, which bases her ethos on her sex. Mostly, the clerks based their ethos on their reliable readings of ancient, well-recognized authorities, especially the Church Fathers. Modern thinkers regard experiences as more reliable than ancient authorities, but, in a medieval context, well recognized authorities were often seen as more reliable than an individual's

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<sup>2</sup> All quotes from the works of the quarrel of the *Rose* are from Baird and Kane's translation and anthology.

experiences and observations. Christine's assertion that her observations and personal experiences as a woman can function as a basis of her ethos fails to recognize that the stereotypes of her sex undermined the very validity of her observations because those stereotypes defined her as unable to perceive the world rationally. Simultaneously, her failure to unquestioningly accept the authority of the Church Fathers, and the male clerks who represented them, undermined her ethos because she seems to affirm the stereotype that women, as Eve's daughters, are prone to sinful disobedience. So to consider Christine's rhetoric circles back to questions about her "feminist" notions as they relate to her historical context and her sex.

Much work has already been done on Christine's "feminism," including, as Sheila Delany has put it, a minor "*querelle de Christine*" concerning her inclusion in the canon of "feminist" writers. Much less work has been done on Christine's rhetoric, and some of that work has been limited to assessments of Christine's style. Despite Christine's occasional comments on her gendered ethos, very little work has been done on the tangle that exists among Christine's own ethos, her status as a woman, and her pro-woman writings. Beginning with Joan Kelly, it currently has become commonplace to celebrate Christine's "feminism," or, at least, her "proto-feminism," in Christine's lengthy works on women and women's concerns. Yet, as Delany asserts and several Christine scholars have discussed, most of Christine's social and political beliefs can not be characterized as "feminist" or even "modern." Christine is a loyal subject of the French crown; she believes that political and domestic power structures should be, in part, determined by a hierarchy of gender; she is uninterested in changing "society," in the modern feminist sense of changing women's legal and political status, though she is deeply concerned with changing beliefs,

aesthetics and behaviors; and she is nostalgic for a chivalric, earlier society, which she likely knew never existed (see Altman 20, Hicks 12-13, and Huot 361-362). Nevertheless, as Sylvia Huot reminds her readers, scholars cannot judge medieval writing according to modern and post-modernist standards (Huot 362). Christine's pro-women arguments are neither less sophisticated than post-modern feminism, or merely a precursor to current feminism; they are a fully formed set of assumptions and ideas about women's worth within the intellectual paradigm of medieval culture. Though I am not here setting out Christine's pro-women beliefs, those pro-women arguments that impinge on her rhetoric and on her audience's reception of her will be discussed here.

In the *querelle*, her most significant use of rhetoric may be her failure to successfully present her ethos. Her opponents argued, for instance, that she could not comprehend the *Rose* because of her gender's stereotypical inability to read beyond the literal. So her opponents see her as failing to understand the aesthetic qualities of the text because she primarily reads the explicit language as immoral instead of affirming it as aesthetically successful. Christine's response to this argument is to assert that women, including herself, can comprehend the *Rose*'s aesthetic achievement and can also assess the text according to moral standards. Her opposition responds by, in effect, calling her a prude. Christine then argues for women's "virtue of shame" (133), and she speaks unequivocally of women's inherent goodness:

[L]et everyone judge rightly according to the truth. If he does judge rightly, he will find that the greatest apparent evil may do little harm. Women kill no one, wound no one, torture no one; they are not treacherous; they set no fires, disinherent no one, poison no one, take neither gold nor silver, cheat no one out of his wealth or inheritance, make no false contracts, nor bring any harm to kingdom, duchies, or empires. (Pizan 38)



Christine's justification of her aesthetic sense, even her ability to read, becomes a justification of women's virtue: as Christine depicts women, they verge on the angelic. Such a depiction of women, as angels in the house, may be offensive to modern feminists after the difficulties women tolerated in the Victorian period caused by that construction of them. Yet this depiction markedly improves the still all too common medieval construction of women, as defined by the Church Fathers and the clerical tradition, as evil tempters of virtuous men (Adam, Samson, David); disobedient wives who deserved to be whipped, as mentioned in contemporary conduct books; and, as St. Paul presumes, sexual and reproductive creatures best avoided (Altman 7-15). Medieval and early Renaissance clerical tradition assumed that women were primarily evil or whores--Meun's section of the *Rose* affirms that assumption far more than it creates it. Not surprisingly, Christine responds to the clerical construction of women's ontological status by acknowledging that women seem to be the "greatest apparent evil." Yet her list, above, of the evils women are not responsible for reconstructs women as passive, gentle beings who do not threaten men, which implies that all these evils, if not carried out by women, must be the fault of men. What began as a defense of Christine's abilities as a sophisticated reader, which seems a ludicrous attack given her established reputation as a poet, quickly mutates to a defense of women's virtue and to an attempt to repudiate the misogynist stereotypes prevalent in the clerical tradition. This shifting of the issue, from attacking and defending the *Rose* to attacking and defending women, is repeated throughout the *querelle*.

Among her attempts at a positive depiction of women are Christine's various rejections of both the slanders she herself endures and the general belittling of all women, both of which are attacks based on the audience's

expectations of women. In one of the most condescending of these arguments, her one of opponents evokes the ethos of a priest. Gontier Col's second letter to Christine condemns her for not only attacking Jean de Meun, but for being a disobedient, and hence implicitly sinful, woman:

Therefore, since I love you sincerely for your virtues and merits, I have first by my letter (which I sent to you day before yesterday) exhorted, advised, and begged you to correct and amend your manifest error, folly, and excessive willfulness which has risen in you, a woman impassioned in this matter, out of presumption or arrogance--may it not displease you if I speak the truth. Thus following the holy commandment and having compassion for you by charitable love, I pray, counsel, and require you a second time by this little note of mine please to correct, retract, and amend your aforementioned error with all with regard to that very excellent and irreproachable doctor of holy divine Scripture, high philosopher, and most learned clerk in all the seven liberal arts. It is astonishing that you have dared and presumed to correct and criticize him detrimentally....Confess your error, and we will have pity on you, will grant mercy to you, and will give you salutary penance. And concerning this matter, in your reply to my other letter kindly let me know at your convenience what your wishes are, before I take the trouble to oppose the false (saving your reverence) judgments which you have seen fit to write against him. (G. Col 60)

Gontier Col is, as Christine recognized, offensive in this letter. He assumes, without arguing for his own position, that he can, or even should, give her penance for disagreeing with him; he states that he requires her to capitulate to him, or face his written repudiation (which Christine recognizes as a threat); and he asserts that all her speech derives from the "presumption" or "arrogance" of a "woman impassioned in this matter." He belittles Christine's argument by constructing it as merely a woman's work, and so appropriates women's inferior gender roles to reconstruct Christine's personal reputation. Christine, however, is not, and cannot be, a priest or theologian to challenge his penance. As a woman, her gender role is to capitulate to men, which Col assumes in his

attack. Also, as a woman, she is presumed to have a tendency to commit evil acts and to be often inspired by evil motives, like arrogance. Col's attack on Christine differs markedly from Jean de Montreuil's similar argument to a, now unknown, man who held views similar to Christine's:

Reconcile yourself, therefore, with the same learned one and most beloved teacher (de Meun), and do not fear because you spoke rashly. For immediately upon seeking our grace, you will receive it, as long as we have no reservation concerning the sincerity of your professed repentance. (Montreuil 44)

Both Col and Montreuil depict Meun as a great teacher, assert that their opponent speaks rashly, and presume that they can give absolution to any who seek it in this matter. Yet they differ radically in their rhetoric and ornate style, and so in the rhetorical force with which they make these assertions. Col's ornate style and insulting tone extends his condemnation past Christine's written arguments to her self, and he validates his personal attack only on her status as a woman, easily ignoring her established reputation as a poet.

As Col's insults show, Christine's gender blinds her audience to her arguments about art and morality. Not surprisingly, Christine responds to Col's construction of her ethos by attempting to redefine women's ontological status:

And if you despise my reasons so much because of the inadequacy of my faculties, which you criticize by your words, "a woman impassioned," etc., rest assured that I do not feel any sting in such criticism, thanks to the comfort I find in the knowledge that there are, and have been, vast numbers of excellent, praise worthy women, schooled in all the virtues--whom would rather resemble than to be enriched with all the goods of fortune. (Pizan 63)

Her reference to the worthy women justifies women's ontological status, and her own reputation, as "good," by briefly rewriting the history of women. This

argument, which is fundamental to the rhetoric of her later, encyclopedic work, the *Cité des dames*, here relies heavily on her audience already knowing which women she means and on her audience's acceptance of that history as evidence of women's inherent decency. Her assertion recognizes, too late, that she must construct her ethos as not only learned, but as more than the stereotypical woman.

Christine made a rhetorical "mistake" in the letters by failing to recognize the way that her culture shaped her ethos was based, first and foremost, on her sex, and she does not fully reconstruct her gender role in the debate. Most notably, she does not use the womanly version of the humility topos, nor does she attempt to win her audience's trust early in the debate. By not establishing a viable ethos near the beginning of the debate, she fails to prevent attacks on her as "only" a woman. Yet, as Maureen Quilligan has noted, her activity in the querelle is deeply concerned with presenting herself as a competent woman: "Her attack on the Rose--indeed her engagement in the 'querelle de la Rose' ... -seems to have been quite self-consciously aimed at establishing the specific possibility of female authority" (Quilligan, "Name," 214). Christine attempts, as Kevin Brownlee accurately notes, to create for herself the persona of a clerk (Brownlee 234 ff); nevertheless, the rhetorical devices she appropriates from that persona backfire on her precisely because she is a woman. The most notable of these backfires occurs when she attempts to use the conventions of clerkly apologia.

The clerkly apologia is both quite similar to, yet fundamentally different from, the humility topos typically found in women's writings. The clerkly version has its own set of conventions, like repeating respectful clauses as *parenthesis*: for example, both the Cols and Christine often couch critiques of each other with

statements like "saving your reverence." More importantly, the clerkly apologia includes denigrating one's own scholarship and praising the learning of one's opposition. In particular, the clerks claim that they are unworthy of defending Meun. Pierre Col depicts his ethos as both weak in intellect and unskillful in speech: "For I am unequal to the task not only on account of the dullness of my intellect, the heaviness of my understanding, my weak memory, and my poorly ordered language, but more especially on account of the vast abundance of good things which are in that work impossible to express" (P. Col 93). Col's use of the apologia asserts his inability in rhetoric and thought in order to obscure his rhetorical skill. This use of humility differs fundamentally from many women's use of the humility topos--where women would claim to be a "worthy" (modest, obedient, silent, and submissive) woman and so worthy of the unusual act of writing or speaking. Col's use of humility is not to affirm his right to speak, but to both praise Meun's skill in comparison to his own and to depict his own arguments as relatively simple and, so, obvious and correct. Col also uses this construction of own his ethos as a means for attacking Christine:

Rather, I simply desire to be... the least among the disciples of the aforesaid Meun. And since your argument against him is so weak that there is no need of a greater, I do not speak for the most advanced disciples of the aforesaid Meun, but rather for the middle or for those near the bottom, where your argument belongs. I am confident also of the complete rightness of the cause I wish to defend; indeed it could stand on its own merits. (P. Col 93)

Col depicts himself as a disciple of Meun, which continues the praise of Meun by presenting him as one worthy of having disciples. Yet, rhetorically, his point is not to praise Meun, or to speak humbly of his own skills, but to belittle Christine for making her critiques. He constructs Christine's ethos as the words

a petty, foolish woman, who cannot see the obvious and whose arguments are readily answered by the least learned of students.

Because the arguments in the *querelle* are seldom consistent, it is interesting, and ironic, that Pierre Col's brother, Gontier, in his letter in the debate humbly contrasts his writing against Christine's skill.

To the worthy, honored, and wise damoiselle Christine: Woman of high and exalted understanding, worthy of honor and great esteem, I have heard say from many notable clerks that among your other studies and virtuous and praiseworthy works, as I understand by their remarks, you have recently written a kind of invective against the book of the *Rose* composed by my master, teacher, and friend the lamented Master Jean de Meun, true Catholic, worthy master, and, in his time, doctor of holy theology, a most profound and excellent philosopher, knowing all that to human understanding is knowable, whose glory and fame lives and will live in the ages to come among understanding men, elevated by his merits, by the grace of God, and by the work of nature. (G. Col 57)

Gontier Col hyperbolically praises Meun, praises Christine a good bit less, and speaks humbly of himself, yet he affirms Christine's skills as both a writer and reader. Significantly, this praise occurs in the letter's salutation, where, according to the *ars dictaminis*, the writer addresses the reader according to his or her personal knowledge of the reader and according to their relationship within the social hierarchy (Perelman 102-113). The medieval *ars dictaminis* is primarily limited to the rhetoric of official letters, either of the secular or ecclesiastical governments. Though the letters of the debate certainly were not official, most of the participants in the debate were secular or ecclesiastical officials, excluding Christine. Also, the *ars dictaminis* generally included some instruction on other modes of letter writing. This art emphasized more the appropriate address made by the writer to the reader than it highlighted the writer's requests of the reader. The salutation's function, then, was significant in

medieval and early Renaissance letters because it affirmed those personal and social relationships. So when Gontier Col indicates that Christine is worthy of his respect by praising her knowledge in his salutation, he establishes the relationship between them as being between equals or near equals, even though, later in his own short note, he condescends to her.<sup>3</sup> Pierre Col does not so indicate respect for Christine, failing to have any salutation at all in one of his letters, though Christine consistently praises her opponents in her salutations to them. The result of this disparity is that Christine seems to be Pierre Col's social inferior because she is not praised by him, and she seems to be over-stepping her social place by inappropriately critiquing well-respected and powerful men against whom she could not, and should not, win.

She continues to praise her opposition, but that praise becomes more and more ironic as she constructs their rhetoric and "subtlety" as not artistically sophisticated, but as intentionally manipulative. For instance, there is a minor battle of the compliments:

O wise clerk, whose keen feeling and facility in expressing your opinions are impeded by no ignorance, I wish to inform you that, although your reasons are well laid out for your purpose, they are contrary to my belief. For despite your beautiful rhetoric, you do not move my heart at all or make me wish to change what I have previously written. (Pizan 116)

In this compliment to Pierre Col, she undermines his argument that the issues she raises belong only to school boys (Col 93) and his claim that his position is obvious and his writing unornamented. Christine constructs "subtlety," either of poetic skill or rhetorical eloquence, as morally questionable throughout her letters: her repeated use of the term "eloquence" verges on sarcasm. For

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<sup>3</sup> There is no consistency in the tone of the letters, and the reasoned arguments in one part of many of the letters is often contradicted by ranting that occurs in other parts of the same letter.

instance, when Christine gathered the letters of the debate and presented copies to both the Queen and to Guillaume de Tignonville, she states that she is distressed that her opposition has targeted her for attack with their sophisticated eloquence against her blunt truth. Her letter to Tignonville makes clear her disgust with ornamentation:

Therefore, I ask, most wise man, that, out of compassion for my feminine ignorance, you see fit to add your sound views to my writing, so that your wisdom may be strength, aid, defense, and support for me against such notable and elevated masters. Their subtle reasons would otherwise quickly overwhelm my own just cause, on account of my own inability to sustain it....It is right that I follow the style of my assailants, although my small learning be a poor match for their beautiful eloquence. (Pizan 68)

She repeats her argument that eloquence is potentially deceitful much later in the debate in response to Pierre Col:

And although I am otherwise engaged and did not intend to write more on the subject, I will nevertheless answer you, bluntly and directly according to my custom, and speak the truth without any glossing over. And since I did not know how to emulate your good style, may you take into consideration my lack of skill. (Pizan 116-117)

Whether she refers to rhetorical ornament as subtlety or eloquence, she sees its use in these letters as deceitful, and in much the same way that she sees the Rose as deceitful: to her mind, both the eloquence of the clerks and of the Rose is not art, but is an obfuscation of the morally questionable ideas presented by the authors.

Like her clerkly opponents, Christine speaks humbly and often of her own small learning, attempting to use the clerkly apologia as her opponents use it. After complimenting Pierre Col, she states: "... you consider it easy to repudiate my reasoning on account of my ignorance, because, apparently, you



are confident of your own good sense and subtlety" (Pizan 119). Her own use of this convention of clerkly humility about one's style is itself deceitful; her style as a poet is still generating worthwhile thought. Yet in the dedication to Tignonville she defends her use of the apology by asserting that she finds prose style difficult. A position she repeats in her salutation to Jean de Montreuil:

To the very competent and wise person, Master John, Secretary to the King our Lord and Provost of Lisle. Reverence, honor, and due respect to you, Lord Provost of Lisle, esteemed Master, sage in morals, lover of knowledge, steeped in learning, and expert in rhetoric; from me, Christine de Pizan, a woman weak in understanding and inadequate in learning--for which things may your sagacity not hold in scorn the smallness of my reasons; rather may it take into account my feminine weakness. It has pleased you out of your goodness (for which I say thanks) to send me a small treatise expressed in fine language and true seeming reasons. (Pizan 46)

Though Christine seems aware of the gender roles that contextualize her words with her mention of her "feminine" weakness, her emulation of the clerkly apologia backfires badly on her. It opens a space for Gontier Col's later "priestly" and condescending demand that she repudiate her criticism of Meun: in that letter he equates her disobedience with a sin against God. Her humility also seems to justify Pierre Col's comments that her position is obviously wrong. In the last of her letters in this debate, and near the very end of it, she again affirms her status as a legitimate student, attempting, too late to be effective, to establish a persuasive ethos: "there is nothing more to be said, save that I can confess, in truth, that I love study and the solitary life so much that by cultivating them I may perhaps have gathered some lowly little flowers from the garden of delights" (Pizan 143). Again, with "lowly" she leaves herself open to repudiation, but this conclusion depicts herself as a clerk, despite being a woman. Christine's humility about her learning backfires because of her sex. No one

seriously questioned the Cols's learning from their comments about inelegant style and small wit, but, as a woman, Christine's ability to even think was assumed to be readily debatable. Gontier Col speculates that the opinions she expresses in her letters are not truly her own, and he asserts instead that her hangers-on goaded her to critique Meun. Christine responds: "I say again and repeat and repeat again as many times as you wish my condemnation of the work entitled the *Roman de la Rose*" (Pizan 63). Christine repeatedly states that her arguments are inspired by reason, not emotion; that they are her own, not others; and that she is a competent reader. She repudiates, many times, the stereotypical weaknesses of women's wit, yet her interlocutors reject her arguments in condescending and off hand remarks. She also often responds to assertions that she is incapable of writing reasonably and reading well. These depictions of her, which construct her reputation for her, rely primarily on the men's expectations of her based on their stereotypes of women generally.

Christine's failure to establish her ethos as a legitimate scholar, and as more than the stereotype of "Woman," necessitates her repeated defenses of her ability to read. When she responds to Jean de Montreuil's letter, she affirms her knowledge:

Having read and considered your letter and having understood it, within the limits of my ability, I disagreed with your remarks and shared the opinion of the learned man to whom your letter was addressed. Thereof, although your letter was not addressed to me and did not require a reply, nevertheless I wish to say, to divulge, and to maintain openly that (saving your grace) you are in grave error to give such lavish and unjustified praise to Meun's book--one which could better be called idleness than useful work, in my judgment. (Pizan 47)

She begins her self-defense here by humbly depicting her ability to read before she asserts her position. The question of Christine's ability to read above the

literal level was much debated in the *querelle*, and is still debated by scholars who, in general, argue that Christine's moral reading of the *Rose* is blind to the appropriateness of the characters's speech. However, when this issue is addressed as a question of rhetoric, the concern is no longer whether she actually could read beyond a literal level, but if she could convince her audience that she could read skillfully. To convince her audience, she uses repetition, affirming her abilities in almost all of the letters. Also, her attacks against her opponent's rhetoric, especially their ornamentation, indicates her sensitivity to the style in the works she reads. For instance, while asserting to Jean de Montreuil that she can read, she satirizes "subtle" language by saying:

Yet may my daring to repudiate and find fault with an author so worthy and so subtle not seem presumption in me. Rather, take heed of the firm conviction which has moved me to oppose some opinions contained in your letter. In truth, a mere assertion not justified by law can be reargued without prejudice. I am not, I confess, learned nor schooled in the subtle language, which would make my arguments dazzling, a language which you indeed can display with a fine array of carefully polished words. Nevertheless, I will not hesitate to express my opinion bluntly in the vernacular, although I may not be able to express myself elegantly.  
(Pizan 43)

Her distaste for ornamentation in prose leaves her open to critical commentary concerning her understanding of a sophisticated style and to complaints that she is envious of a style that she is unable to emulate. Pierre Col asserts that Christine is motivated by pure envy of Meun's success and skill. Though in the process he acknowledges, finally, that she can read and understand sophisticated prose style, he depicts her as vile, instead of as merely stupid, which uses the more negative stereotype of women to undermine her credibility. Christine hotly contests his argument and his depiction of her, which acknowledges the potency of the stereotype to shape her audience's

perception of her character:

Since you concede that it was not from ignorance, you may be sure that it was not envy which led that good man to blame the book, for I am convinced that the height of his elevated life precludes envy. Despite my own admitted ignorance, I assure you I feel no envy....Yet I assure you that I love beautiful, wise, and well-written books. I seek them out and read them eagerly (within the limits of my understanding), and if I do not love that book of the *Rose*, it is simply because the work teaches an evil and dishonorable lesson, and sows far more evil than good. (Pizan 142)

Christine ends her participation in these debates by reasserting, again, her ability to read.

As her response to Col indicates, when she was not defending her ability to read, she is responding to attacks on her ability to reason clearly, instead of reacting emotionally. The *querelle* was far from civil: the attacks on her "impassioned" tone are justified, though she is no more shrill than the men. When Christine's ire is released, it is both extensive and heated, making her sound far from a rational scholar:

Further, let us consider the subject matter of choice of words, which many people find reprehensible. Dear Lord! What horrible stuff! What an affront to honor! What reprehensible teachings recorded in the chapter about the Old Woman! In God's name, what can one find there but sophistical exhortations filled with ugliness and things horrible to recall? Ha!...Then, in the chapter about Jealousy, my God, what great good can be observed there! What need to record the dishonorable things and shameful words, which are common enough in the mouths of the unfortunate people impassioned by this sickness!...And the wickedness which is there recorded of women! Many people attempt to excuse him by saying that it is the jealous Man who speaks and that in truth Meun does no more than God himself did when He spoke through the mouth of Jeremiah! But whatever lying additions he may have made, he certainly could not have rendered worse or abased the condition of women more! Ha! When I remember the deceits, the hypocrisies, and the conduct dissembled within marriage and outside it, which one can find in this book--certainly, I consider these to be beautiful and edifying tales for one to hear! (Pizan 49-50)

Enough, there are pages of her sarcasm and anger. Her anger, though it resembles various negative stereotypes of women--the nag, the shrew, the scold, and such--actually emulates the behavior of her clerkly opponents for her tone is no more irrational than the clerks's, as in Pierre Col's attack on her:

[A]s if you wish to say that you condemn him in this particular place, and therefore set yourself up as a judge although you have spoken out of prejudice and outrageous presumption. Oh excessively foolish pride! Oh opinion uttered too quickly and thoughtlessly by the mouth of a woman! a woman who condemns a man of high understanding and dedicated study, a man who, by great labor and deliberation, has made the very noble book of the *Rose*, which surpasses all others that ever were written in French. When you have read this book a hundred times, provided you have understood the greater part of it, you will discover that you could never have put your time and intellect to better use. (P. Col 103)

Enough, there are pages of the men's sarcasm and anger as well. Like Christine's attempt to emulate the clerkly tone of humility, she attempts to emulate their tone of justified anger. Her anger fails to persuade her audience for the same reason and in the same way as her use of the humility topos failed for her: she does not consider how her clerkly behavior is constrained by her opponents's expectations of her according to their clerkly and Catholic stereotypes of Eve's daughters within the context of 1400's France.

Nevertheless, because of her harsh tone and her gender, her opponents regularly question whether Christine is rational. Her response was generally twofold. She implicitly trusted the strength of her arguments to persuade despite any concerns about her gender, and she tells her audience that these are not the ravings of one single mad woman, for she was not alone in her position:

I am far from alone in the true, just, and reasonable opinion which I hold against the work of the *Rose* on account of its most reprehensible lessons, although there may well be some good in it. (Pizan 119)

Generally, she seldom even acknowledges the connection between her gender and her opponents's attacks on her supposed incompetence, and she does not to constrain the gendered stereotypes about herself as a woman before she engages in this debate. By not reconstructing her audience's expectations about her, she implicitly accepts the stereotypes about women as constructed by her culture, which preestablished her ethos as unreliable, overly emotional, and potentially very sinful. This rhetorical "mistake" necessitates her repeated insistence on her ability to reason, just as it necessitates her repeated defense of her ability to read, though she never convinced the Cols of either. On the rare occasions when she does acknowledge the connections between her sex and her oppositions's perceptions of her, she does not undermine the Cols's assumptions:

Whereupon, after you had read and thoroughly scrutinized my letter, wherein your error was punctured by truth, you wrote in a fit of impatience your second, more offensive letter, reproaching my feminine sex, which you describe as *impassioned by nature*. Thus you accuse me, a woman, of folly and presumption in daring to correct and reproach a teacher as exalted, well qualified, and worthy as you claim the author of that book to be. (Pizan 62-63)

Christine recognizes that her difficulty in convincing them derives from her ontological status as constructed by her culture, yet she does not undermine that stereotype of women in order to allow her own reputation as a poet to function as her ethos. Later in the same letter, she fleetingly attempts to affirm her ethos as a woman by briefly referring to the history of excellent women--a history she would later write in full as the *Cité des dames*. Unfortunately, the reference in this letter to these competent women is just that, a glancing reference, unsupported by either well-respected authorities or by a listing of

those women's actions. Without that evidence, her defense of her gender is weak: it is not surprising, then, that the Cols'ss attack continue to reappear in the *querelle*. Such repetition also occurs in her attempts to use the humility topos as the men do, which does little more than allow her opponent's to use her humble statements to question her abilities to reason, to read, and to think independently.

Christine's opponents see her as not sophisticated, not literate, and not rational--when they are not expecting her to be vile and sinful--despite their shallow praises of her. By failing to control her ethos, especially by failing to undermine the stereotypes that her clerkly audience uses in constructing their expectations of her, Christine allows her enemies to define her. I have unpacked the fundamental differences in the nature of a woman's humility compared to the male clerk's as an example of Christine's seeming blindness during the *querelle* to the nature of her ontological status as a woman, and I will in the next two chapters discuss how the *Cité des dames* and the *Trésor de la cité des dames* may respond to, and reconstruct, women's ontological status in order to guide women in appropriating that new ontological status as the bases of their ethos.

## CHAPTER III

CREATING ETHOS: CHRISTINE DE PIZAN'S CITE DES DAMES

When Christine de Pizan wrote the Cité des dames she had recently completed the drawn-out *querelle* about the ethics of literary misogyny in Jean de Meun's section of the Roman de la rose. Maureen Quilligan, connecting the Cité to this debate, focuses on the literary significance of Christine's polemic:

Christine's choice to write works defending women was a self conscious literary move,...especially in the attack on the authority of the Roman de la rose. The Cité des dames is a continuation of her anti-misogynist arguments against the Rose and a further exfoliation of her uniquely female authority. (Quilligan 2)

Quilligan's argument contextualizes the Cité within the literary conventions of various allegorical debates, like the *Consolation of Philosophy*. I, however, look at it as polemical history. Christine's pro-women tales in the Cité des dames retells history, to borrow the pun, as her-story--both as Christine's written reconstruction of women's stories and as a comprehensive redefinition of her sex and her gender. By reconstructing women's history, she undermines the established "history" of women, which was one of the more significant supports of late medieval and early modern literary and clerical misogynistic constructions of women. From Christine's history women could no longer be seen as traditionally corrupt in behavior and vile in themselves. McLeod's discussion of Christine's history presents the Cité as an ethical reaction to the conventions of misogyny.

When Christine de Pizan responded to literary misogyny by structuring the Livre de la Cité des Dames as a universal history, she had a more



profound moral and artistic purpose than has previously been suggested. Literary misogyny had, after all, consistently relegated women to minor genres (in medieval literature those lacking immediate ethical utility). In rejecting this relegation with her choice of genre, Christine rejected much of the misogynist argument. Her alternative, an important moral and artistic synthesis, also reflects the ethical cast of late medieval literature....Christine remembers history and fixes it forever by constructing a city of ladies. In short, the city represents not just the text but the mental process that creates the text--the integration of personal memory (identity) into social memory (history). By the end of the defense, then, the city represents not just the female gender and universal history but the participation of both in the narrator's self-identification. (McLeod 37, 44)

McLeod's essay argues that Christine constructs women's history in ways similar to her emotional/cognitive constructions of her "self." Like McLeod, I believe the *Cité* is as much an ethical as it is an artistic response to literary misogyny, yet I see it as distinctly polemical as well. Where McLeod found it fruitful to consider the identity of a "real" Christine, I consider the authorizing self that "Christine" implies, and the rhetoric of her self presentation.

Christine's near 130 stories portray women as virtuous and as authorities: she presents women's speech as more believable, or at least more truthful, than many of their interlocutors's arguments. Interestingly, Christine portrays women as virtuous by retelling stories of some of the most infamous, as well as the most famous, women in history and mythology. The result, as Stecopoulos has argued, is that

By highlighting the various deeds of these women of ill repute--virtues that had been either ignored or unfavorably construed by male authorities--Christine shows (indeed *proves*) that these women have been improperly slandered by post-*Romance of the Rose* historiography, and she articulates new functions for their experiences within her own, restorative history. (Stecopoulos 51)

By salvaging the personal reputations of these particular women, Christine establishes proof of women's worth within the most slanderous of tales told, which undermines the notion that women are, by inclination, corrupt while proving that women are, by nature, good. Women who appropriate these new tales, as McLeod argues, can gain "control over self-definition" which, in that historical context, "offers women...their surest defense" (McLeod 45). More specifically, these stories attempt to change the stereotypes held about women and the audience's expectations of them, in order to reconstruct women's ethos. In this chapter, I will argue that the *Cité des dames* constructs the possible range of ethos positions for women by redefining their perceived nature. The women of the *Cité* represent models for real women's speech and action and for a real audience's positive expectations of them. In the next chapter, I will discuss how the sequel, the *Trésor de la cité des dames*, develops methods by which women readers can appropriate those models for their own speech. Together, the two books promote women's use of persuasion--first by creating cultural spaces for women's speech and then by establishing a rhetoric for that speech. These efforts, I believe, respond to Christine's experience in the *querelle* and attempt to correct women's problematical ethos position, as exhibited by the Cols's easy dismissal of her arguments as merely the words of a woman.

Despite having presented her personal reputation as a poet and as an able *clerc* in the *querelle*, Christine still begins the *Cité* with an elaborate justification of her own writing and of her ethos. Modern critics, including many who judge Christine quite differently, like Delany (84) and Quilligan (1), consistently see the opening of the *Cité* as a sincere, even autobiographical, response to a medieval woman's marginalization. Yet Christine is not the

passive, isolated woman reader she presents in the opening gambit of the *Cité*: by the time she wrote the *Cité* she was firmly established at court as a poet and was developing a reputation as a scholar. In the opening narration, she begins her tale with herself, in her study, doing some "light" reading after many long hours of "devoting" herself to the "weighty opinions of various authors" (3): she begins her text by locating herself physically and intellectually. In that context of isolation and passivity she comes across Matheolus's misogynistic little treatise.

I called this opening a "gambit" because it rhetorically situates the reader with the Christine of the narrative. Readers are likely to sympathize with this Christine because of the seeming "honesty" and "sincerity" of this voice. But this Christine is a straw woman: a representative of an intellectual woman's likely responses to the misogyny she will encounter in reading writers like Matheolus. Matheolus is himself a straw man, a writer of "no authority" who repeats the misogyny of the philosophers, poets, and orators who come before him (*Cité* 3). The "Christine" of the narrative believes "Matheolus." She repeats his beliefs--effectively speaking in his voice--in her prayer of lamentation for being female (*Cité* 5). Christine's prayer is a rhetorical maneuver, as McLeod notes; it highlights an ethical reaction to the experience of reading, constructing a writer's words as significant not only in aesthetic, but in ethical, registers (McLeod 40). As Brabant and Brint, among others, have noted, this moment announces one of Christine's dominant themes in the text: "Drawing the very sentiment of her existence from how she is regarded by men, she depicts the loss of her self-identity" (207). Directly after that prayer, the Three Ladies--Reason, Rectitude and Justice--appear. As the Three Ladies pursue their argument, and as the Christine of the narrative is slowly persuaded by them, they come to represent the ethical voice of the implied author. This shifting of

the location of Christine's voice, from the seemingly "real life" Christine of the opening narrative, to the Three Ladies, is primarily an ethos appeal. By speaking in the voice of the Three Ladies--by setting the arguments against misogyny in their mouths--Christine can speak with their authority, instead of her own, recently debated, authority as clerk, scholar, and able reader. She creates for herself a female voice which is unquestionable: her *ethos* becomes the ethical positions of Reason, Rectitude, and Justice.

Christine highlights her "self" and her voice in the text. As if she were in a dialogue with an earlier self--which, in many ways, she likely was--she repeatedly identifies the questioning voice of the Christine of the narrative as "*Je, Christine*" while placing her reflections into the wiser mouths of the allegorical ladies. Quilligan discusses Christine's use of the "*Je*"-and-name formula and its unusual significances in the *Cité*:

While the appearance of the formula "*Je, Christine*" is not entirely anomalous in medieval literary practice, its repetition throughout Christine's oeuvre--especially in that the *Livre de la cité des dames*--makes its idiosyncratic frequency a signal mark of Christine's authority, a "signature" in more ways than one. It invites us to examine the lessons, in Christine's own experience, in the historical condition then obtaining, and in the potentialities of the literary system, which taught her to establish her authorial *self* by such a naming, and specifically by a signature seen as a gendered term. (Quilligan, *Allegory*, 12)

Christine repeats her signature as her gendered identity as writer/interlocutor in the dialogue by appropriating a clerkly convention from the prologues of chronicles (Quilligan, "Name," 204). The chroniclers's signatures would identify them by their names and either cities or class; Christine, however, gives only her gendered first name, leaving out the indications of her place in the social and class structure other than her status as a woman. Though Quilligan sees

this self-naming as especially modern, for it indicates a possible post-Romantic notion of the self, I suspect instead that it highlights the female interlocutors presented and the (debated) validity of questions asked, and answered, by women.

This signature directly engages the stereotypes about women; Christine's intellectual community of the court, clerks, and Church expected women to be "full of every vice" (*Cité* 4). The community's moral and ethical "standards" in which Christine attempts to situate herself automatically placed her outside of that community. As she indicates, Christine is doubly constrained; her actions are full of vices and her words full of deception:

Judging from the treatises of all philosophers and poets and from all orators...it seems that they all speak from one and the same mouth. They all concur in one conclusion: that the behavior of women is inclined to and full of every vice. (*Cité* 3-4)

Christine *seems* to believe this depiction of her sex, temporarily: Reason quickly compares her to a fool who believed he was a woman because he was wearing women's clothes (*Cité* 6). This comparison, between Christine and the fool, seems to "trouble," in Judith Butler's sense of the term, the sex and gender constructions which typically contextualized women; the biological determination of women's gender roles appears to be rejected. Because the fool *could* see himself as gendered female from the clothing he wears, gender becomes, like the clothing, artificial, arbitrary, and variable. However, Reason's comparison of Christine to this fool ridicules Christine's delusion by ridiculing the fool's confusion between the variability of gender roles and the stability of biological sex. The fool's true "self," as male, remains readily rediscoverable from his own lived experience. Despite the implication that gender is malleable,

Christine constructs women's biological selves as stable and implicitly assumes an essentializing relationship between biological sex and gender.

Nevertheless, she admits to a flexibility within gender roles and presents a range of "feminine" expressions of self which often impinge on male roles as potentially female.

Lady Reason responds to the clerkly and literary stereotypes of women by arguing that women should trust their own lived experiences more than the rhetorical force of patriarchal authority of writers like Matheolus:

...we have come to bring you out of ignorance which so blinds your own intellect that you shun what you know for a certainty and believe what you do not know or see or recognize except by virtue of many strange opinions. (*Cité* 6)

Christine's "ignorance" is depicted not as a lack of knowledge: she starts this allegory reading in her study. Instead, her ignorance presents her blind acceptance of the "strange opinions" of an authoritative *clerc* and a devolution of her reasoning into her passively perceiving women through Matheolus's eyes instead of trusting what she "see[s]" and "recognize[s]." Christine is taught by Lady Reason, by her own reason, to trust her lived, personal experiences as more authoritative than the patriarchs's arguments. Both Delany and Stecopoulos have noted this reconstruction of "epistemology," which asserts that experience is "a source of genuine knowledge" and which encourages the "use of personal experience against misogyny" (Delany 84-85). Stecopoulos observes that Christine's method for discovering knowledge affirms women's arguments from experience:

Christine laments her folly in listening to the harangues of male clerkly authorities regarding women--she paid heed to these harangues despite her own experience, her *personal* and *lived* encounters as a "natural

woman" (*femme naturelle*) with the virtues of other women from all social classes.... (Stecopoulos 48)

Christine's own observations, from across the social and economic classes, provides the logical "backing," in Toulmin's terms, for her descriptions of women in the *Cité*. This backing is, of course, liberating for women--for though women were usually prevented from learning to read and write, they could not be utterly sheltered from life. Christine, through this argument for an epistemology based on experience, redefines a fundamental assumption in much of medieval rhetoric. She rejects the ethos of well-recognized *auctores* as a deeply trustworthy appeal, and shifts the basis of persuasive speech from the authority of the rhetor to the experiences of the audience. This shift, from ethos appeals to the reasoning applied by an actively listening/reading audience, infuses much of Christine's own ethos, making her seem both reasonable and cooperative with her readers.

With this series of reconstructions of the apparently true to the actually true--from the seeming locale of her voice in the character of "Christine" to her implied voice in the allegorical Ladies, from her seeming authority as a well recognized poet and *clerc* to her real authority as an experienced, well-read, and analytical woman, and from the assumed authority of trusted *auctores* to the reasoning abilities of an audience--she relieves "Christine's" passive despondency and opens the *Cité des dames*. This opening indicates that Christine is doing more than merely justifying good women, or reconstructing the culture's basis for perceiving women--she is also redefining what constitutes a rhetor's "authority" and "believability" by eliminating the expectation that authority lies in traditional, well-recognized, male *auctores* and by asserting the position of authority in thinking/listening people, male or female. A rhetor, then,

appeals to the thinking of the audience, and works with their thinking, in order to persuade them. In this construction of rhetoric, only by already agreeing, to some extent, with the evidence in the *Cité* will an audience be persuaded by it. Though one consequence of this shift would be a democratization of authority, which the monarchist Christine would likely have opposed, another consequence is the expectation that women could possibly speak and write, whose arguments are validated by experience instead of silenced by the male *auctores* and the misogynistic traditions.

Even before Joan Kelly said that "Christine had created a space for women to oppose [the] onslaught of vilification and contempt, and [that] the example of her citadel served them for centuries" (Kelly 73), scholars have recognized Christine's contribution to "feminist" thought. Stecopoulos asserts that Christine's "feminism" derives both from defining women's nature and from reversing literary stereotypes (Stecopoulos 50): Christine celebrates women as naturally more pure than, and often morally superior to, men. Christine, through Lady Reason, repeatedly asserts that the stories she collects are intended as evidence. They are not collected primarily for the readers's pleasure, but are presented as culturally significant statements which change the "reality" of women. For instance, when asked by "Christine" whether women could rule, Lady Reason says "...in case anyone says that women do not have a natural sense for politics and government, I will give you examples of several stories of women who are able to lead armies, govern, and comprehend politics" (*Cité* 32). Reason remakes the presumed "reality" of women's ability to govern by showing the reality of women who have governed. Christine's history, then, is an unabashedly rhetorical act--she uses it to persuade the reader of women's "true" nature, attempting to use rhetoric to change belief. Compared to the



common orthodox, and particularly the virulent clerkly misogyny, the proof that women are, by nature, “good” does vastly improve women’s cultural status, even though Christine argues against changing women’s political status.

Christine’s own ethos, and the success of her history of women as a basis for ethical and persuasive speech, relies not only on making her own case for women’s worth, but on refuting those assumptions in the patriarchal tradition. Many of her retellings take the traditional depictions of women to task: one method she uses is reading mythological tales as actual women’s lives. Though such examples of goddesses and enchantresses as historically real women may seem spurious to modern ears, Christine’s personal context did not differentiate among myths, magic, and valid science as much as we do. Her father was a court astrologer and astronomer, and she presents “enchantments” as an “art” in her examples.

In order to achieve her objective, she places all her characters within a continuum that, quite purposefully, does not distinguish between ancient and contemporary, “real” and fictitious. The decontextualization allows Christine to turn many so-called “mythic” women (who otherwise might not be considered viable examples of historical female achievement) to her advantage; she utilizes them as her coworkers in an ongoing feminine endeavor--the construction of what she calls ‘The City of Ladies.’ (Stecopoulos 48)

By decontextualizing the mythic women, Christine appropriates the classical stories upon which medieval clerkly and literary stereotypes of women were founded. In effect, she takes both the most damning and the most celebratory of classical tales of pagan women to construct the range of gender roles women can adopt by their nature as women. She will, in the martyrology, depict the gender roles granted to women by grace. Between these two sources of tales, the classical and the Christian, she argues that women are “good” by nature

and by grace, refuting the stereotypes of them in the clerkly and literary traditions.

To prove women's virtuous nature, Christine includes, for instance, a series of examples on women's intelligence as shown through the lives of ancient women. Christine separates her comments on women's intelligence into two overarching sections--women's ability to comprehend and their ability to create. Christine asks Reason to

enlighten me again, whether it has ever pleased God, who has bestowed so many favors on women, to honor the feminine sex with the privilege of the virtue of high understanding and great learning, and whether women ever had a clever enough mind for this. I wish very much to know of this because men maintain that the mind of women can learn only a little.  
(*Cité* 63)

Reason answers her by saying that she will give "proof through examples" of women's ability to learn and so tells of Sempronia. Christine then argues that women can create knowledge: Reason explains that

You can...clearly see how God, who does nothing without reason, wished to show that He does not despise the feminine sex,...because it so pleased Him to place such great understanding in women's brains that they are intelligent enough not only to learn and retain the science but also to discover new science themselves, indeed sciences of such great utility and profit for the world that nothing has been more necessary.  
(*Cité* 78)

Christine supplies many tales of women discovering particular branches of scientific and intellectual study, showing that they can function as clerks, intellectuals, and literati. Her examples include Cornificia for her poetry (*Cité* 64); Proba for her mastery of the liberal arts, her poetry, and her compilations of topoi from the ancients to retell the Bible (*Cité* 65); Sappho for inventing several

genres of lyric, short narrative, and lament (*Cité* 68); Leontium for her philosophy (*Cité* 68); Manto for divinations (*Cité* 69); Medea for knowledge of medicinal and magical herbs and Circe for her art of enchantment (*Cité* 69-70); Nicostrata for her scholarship, her development of Roman law, and her invention of the Latin alphabet and language (*Cité* 70-71); Minerva for her development of a Greek shorthand, shortcuts for adding, wool cloth-making, extraction of vegetable oil, designing of carts and wagons, flutes, fifes and all wind instruments, and particularly for arms and armor and the skills to use that armor (*Cité* 72-74); Ceres for agriculture and the city-state (*Cité* 75-76); Isis for a shorthand of Egyptian script and for teaching agriculture and justice (*Cité* 76-77); Arachne for dyeing wool, tapestry-making, making nets and snares, and cultivating flax and hemp (*Cité* 81-82); Pamphile for cultivating silk (*Cité* 83); Thamaris, Irene and Marcia for painting (*Cité* 84); and Sempronia for eloquence (*Cité* 86).<sup>1</sup> Though Christine mentions other learned women later in the text, these comprise her primary examples of the range and depth of women's intellectual abilities. When Christine, speaking through Reason, depicts educated women in particular, she is undermining men's near monopoly of clerical training (*Cité* 78). Women's primary intellectual contributions comprised more practical discoveries than theoretical work. Nevertheless, women's mastery of knowledge is secured through the evidence of these lives. If one believes the accuracy of the tales, then her presentation of them is persuasive because the audience observes, through the histories, the fact of women's cognitive abilities.

Christine's argument is, actually, an *a priori* one, for if women can create

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<sup>1</sup> I cannot not mention that she starts her list with a poet and ends with a rhetor--if bracketing is a significant structural device for her, the autobiographical nature of women's intellectual work as bracketed between art and persuasion is intriguing, if irrelevant here.

knowledge they can certainly master knowledge. *A priori* arguments succeed because of the nature of categories: if a category contains an object, then a larger category which contains the first category must also contain the object. Here, if women have "the strength of emotion and ... the subtly of mind" (*Cité* 70) to have "discovered any new arts and sciences which are necessary, good and profitable" (*Cité* 70), then women must also have the potential ability to master the known arts and sciences. As Christine explains, "...it is not such a great feat of mastery to study and learn some field of knowledge already discovered by someone else as it is to discover by oneself some new and unknown thing." (*Cité* 70). By using an *a priori* argument she effectively kicks the ladder out from under her: she asserts that women have potentially always already been intelligent, and simply not recognized as such. The *a priori* argument is, of course, twofold--for if women by nature can discover knowledge, then Christine, as a woman, is defined as a possible discoverer of knowledge. The way in which she categorizes women has two significant results. They are pro-women arguments, specifically showing the kinds of intelligence one can discover in women. Yet they also construct the range of an intellectual woman's ethos positions that an audience can expect of them, including Christine's own ethos as a studious woman. These intellectual women are shown as teachers, scientists, artists, and more.

The structure and allegory of the text functions to delineate the various possible qualities of the ethos of a good woman speaking well. Though it is an academic commonplace to comment on the connections between the *Cité*'s allegory and its structure, the criticism, interestingly, is not consistent in its presentations of those connections. Quilligan, who looks most closely at the allegory in the *Cité*, considers the text's linear presentation as a series of

individual tales, and discusses, for instance, the significance and authority of the “mother.” For all of her very close reading, she does not delve too deeply into the significance of the text’s three books. Mostly, critics attempt to depict the books as thematically structured. Brabant and Brint argue that the three books challenge convention, gather new information, and reconstruct knowledge, respectively (210). Altman argues that the three books show the City as “built by Reason, peopled by Integrity, and defended by Justice” (17). She reads the sections’s themes as arguing “for women’s natural capabilities,” as educating “women by means of examples of righteousness,” and as presenting “a history of famous women and their contributions to society” (18). Unlike Brabant and Brint and Altman, who read the *Cité*’s themes according to societal notions about knowledge or women, McLeod reads the books as referring to the narrator’s personal “identity formation” (43). For McLeod, “Reason’s mirror shows a being’s true nature (reasonable reflection). Rectitude’s ruler measures that nature in action (evaluation). Justice’s measuring cup apportioning a judgment (decision)...” (43). McLeod’s reading of the structure also draws connections between Reason’s ethical arguments and the parts of an oration. For all the similar ethics suggested by these readings, I find Brownlee’s reading to be the most compelling for he sees the unity between books one and two in which Christine relies primarily on classical and historical examples to show women’s nature.

The third and final part of Christine de Pizan’s *Livre de la cité des dames* (1404-1405) is the culmination of the book’s basic rhetorical and ideological strategy: an explicit and systematic defense of women against the standard charges of the misogynist tradition, effected by adducing specific female examples of superlative achievement in virtually every area of human endeavor. In part 1 of the *Cité des dames* the allegorical character Raison initiates this process with a series of female *exempla*--drawn largely from the classical world--in politics, law,

war, and the arts and sciences. In part 2, the allegorical character Droiture (Rectitude) continues the process with an extensive list of women who were exemplary embodiments of moral virtue. In part 3, the allegorical character Justice completes the project by narrating the stories of women who are exemplary in the spiritual realm, that is, in terms of the highest Christian values. (Brownlee 115)

I find the smaller divergence between Reason's and Rectitude's arguments, as depicted by Brownlee, significant when compared to the difference between their arguments and Justice's martyrology. I also find that Christine implicitly minimizes the differences among the books. Before she elaborates on intellectual women, who are the group Reason discusses most, she presents a few examples of, first, "just" women who were judges and advocates and, second, a group of chivalrous, right-thinking women warriors and rulers. The "justice" of the first women discussed is allegorically represented by the speaker of the last book, Lady Justice. Internal to that bracket is the right-thinking women/Rectitude (book 2) bracket. Further into the text is the reasoning women/Reason (book 1) group. All three brackets are framed by "Christine's" voice and her prayers at the beginning and very end of the *Cité*. The effect is to internalize the virtues into the frame/ethos of "Christine"'s voice and to hierarchize those virtues--Justice being closest to Christine and Reason furthest away which emphasizes ethical thought and action over logic. This bracketing resolves a problem I have had with the allegory and structure of the text. I could not understand why Justice presents the martyrology, or why the third section of this text is smaller than the other two sections when ethical action is clearly important to Christine's thought. I now suspect she is highlighting the virtue of Justice by making that voice closet to her own. Also the bracketing across the books removes the seeming distinctions between the books, making the *Cité*

cohere more fully in voice and theme.

Books two and three continue Christine's redefinitions of women's gender roles: book two shows women as ethical, and book three shows them as, by grace, holy. For instance, *Rectitude*, whose theme is integrity (cf. Altman), tells of a young wife's devoted love for her husband, an old philosopher. *Rectitude* asserts that "this noble lady's only thought [was] to serve him and preserve his peace as one who loved him most loyally and dearly" (*Cité* 131). Also, *Rectitude* presents pagan women as wise: for example, she introduces her book with the "sovereign dignity" of the "sibyls, most filled with wisdom" (*Cité* 99) who were wise enough to prophesied Christ's birth (*Cité* 100). *Justice*, in the last book, speaks of women's potential when blessed by God. She speaks of Saint Catherine, describing her as "beautiful, noble, and authoritative" who "so successfully overwhelmed [her audience] that they were confounded and unable to answer her questions" (*Cité* 220), which presents a religious, moral woman as a rhetor. Particularly interesting in the martyrology is the self-authorization involved in Christine's retelling of Saint Christine's life, as Brownlee has argued.

By the end of the *Cité des dames's* Saint Christine story, Christine de Pizan as author has--in a striking gesture of self-authorization--incorporated the authority both of the clerkly hagiographer--the witness to the saint's martyrdom--and of the female martyr herself. The female voice of Christine-*auctor* is thus doubly guaranteed. (Brownlee 132)

Quilligan concurs with Brownlee that the Saint Christine story, and the feminized version of Christ's name in the "Christine" name, infuses Christine de Pizan with special authority (Quilligan, "Name," 221). Brownlee argues that the Saint Christine story emphasizes the persuasiveness of the Saint's voice. From these two characteristics of the Saint's life, Brownlee argues that this tale

significantly authorizes Christine. Yet I have difficulties agreeing with Brownlee's assertion that this tale is her primary ethos appeal in the Cité. Not only have I noted several other ethos appeals in the text, most rhetors attempt to win the audience's trust early on in a text in order to keep their audiences's reading or listening. Certainly, this story does affirm Christine's voice, but I doubt that it is as significant as Brownlee argues. Generally, these histories of women redefine the gender roles available to women: the new stereotypes of women, as reasonable, honorable, wise and devout, permit women to function, at need, as rhetors and rulers. Not surprising, Christine tells of a contemporary woman who defended her husband's estate while he was a prisoner of war and of another woman who taught in her father's place when he was too ill.

Nevertheless, Christine does not argue that women should appropriate men's roles, especially not men's public roles, except cases of dire need. Early in the Cité Reason states:

Now, as to this particular question, dear friend, one could just as well ask why God did not ordain that men fulfill the offices of women, and women the offices of men. So I must answer this question by saying that just as a wise and well ordered lord organizes his domain so that one servant accomplishes one task and another servant another task, and that what the one does the other does not do, God has similarly ordained man and woman to serve Him in different offices....(Cité 31)

Christine avoids a direct challenge to the culturally accepted division of labor and the incumbent prestige and financial rewards granted to much of men's labor. Instead she limits women to more domestic work and explicitly rejects the idea of challenging the societal norms of who does what work. Though Christine proves her skill as a professional as well as intellectual, as in her use of legal-judicial rhetoric (Curnow 151), she only argues that women can



surpass men in skills and knowledge (Curnow 157), not that women should appropriate male roles or behaviors. Instead, Christine accepts the domestication of women: claiming, for instance, that women can understand law but should remain out of the courts, which is the domain of men (*Cité* 31). Her acceptance of women's domestic roles, excepting unusual circumstances, remains an unquestioned limitation on women's behavior and speech. As Altman argues:

Christine's "feminism" is grounded in medieval philosophy: women are different from men. Each sex has its task and performs its duties according to its nature and its inclination as well as according to custom. She believes that because men are more powerful than women, they alone have the strength to execute the laws. Since by custom women cannot appear in public except discretely, women have no role in government nor in public life; both custom and nature forbid it. Even so, Christine acknowledges that the work of men and women is not always distinguishable and goes so far as to praise women who do men's work better than men do. (Altman 18-19)

When women must behave as men, and do men's work, it must be because the man is unavailable--either dead, as in Christine's own case, or ill, or off to one of the many wars.

Again, Christine's acceptance of men's and women's separate social spheres does not extend to her notions of their natures; for instance, she does not see all women, or all men, as wise. Rectitude says that "... you must know that all women are not wise--nor all men, for that matter" (*Cité* 134). For Christine, women generally should remain in their roles, and men should succeed at theirs. Yet Christine is not caught in a duality of gender roles; she recognizes exceptions and limitations, and so is not behaving incongruously in her defense of women and in her attacks on men. She simply assumes, as a premise of her argument, that she is herself an exception to the general

expectations of male/female gender roles. She redefines woman as virtuous and capable, but not necessarily as public, despite being very public herself.<sup>2</sup>

Even so, in her construction of women, it remains possible to define a virtuous woman as one best silent, as many of Christine's sources did. Refuting the common assumption that women's speech too often causes harm, Reason tells Christine that

...God has demonstrated that He has truly placed language in women's mouths so that He might be thereby served. They should not be blamed for that from which issues so much good and so little evil, for one rarely observes that great harm comes from their language. (*Cité* 30)

Not surprisingly, the Three Ladies repeatedly present good women as also good orators: we hear of Dido and Sempronia, Esther and blessed Catherine. Christine clenches her point when, speaking through Reason, she describes a time when Christ said to a woman "O most wise woman, who taught you to speak this way? You have won your cause through your prudent language which stems from your good will" (*Cité* 29). Christine employs here another a *priori* argument, implying that if Christ can be persuaded by a wise woman using prudent language and having good will, then certainly any mere mortal man should listen to such a woman. The sex of the speaker remains relevant to Christine, but it is no longer damning of women speakers. Instead, "good" women are shown as persuasive, and Christine refers to some of her contemporaries to prove it.

By using tales of pagan women for many of her examples in books one and two, Christine implies that women are virtuous *by nature*, and she

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<sup>2</sup> I am giving Christine the benefit of the doubt here: she could be seen as hypocritically agreeing to the domestication of women so as to curry favor with the patriarchal, intellectual establishment. Yet after the vicious slanders she contended with from respected members of that very establishment, I seriously doubt that she would attempt to shallowly flatter them later.

appropriates male *auctores* to do so. By using the *auctores* to define women's nature, as Stecopoulos argues, she "traps" those *auctores* and the writers who rely on them:

By citing misogynist "authorities," Christine works within the vary tradition that these men of learning claim to represent. She follows this practice first in order to expose their inaccuracy and unjustified bias; she then molds their methods to her own moral and historical purpose. She thereby traps them at their own game. Moreover, "remolding" is exactly what Christine aims to accomplish in the *Livre de la Cité des Dames*. This history of the world according to Christine reflects a particularly, and indispensably noteworthy, feminine cast: her narrative consequently gives voice to participants increasingly ignored, even maligned....It mimics the techniques and indeed the very tales of the misogynist authorities (*auctores*)--even while undermining their unfavorable depiction of women--in order to authorize its rectification of women's position in society. (Stecopoulos 48-49)

In the martyrology, she similarly appropriates well known tales and the well trusted conventions of Saints's lives to depict holy women's behavior. By arguing about women's nature using the same evidence and the same techniques as her authoritative opposition, she hedges her trust in her reasoning audience.

Justice, when welcoming the Virgin into the completed *Cité*, states the thesis of the book:

My Lady, what man is so brazen to dare think or say that the feminine sex is vile in beholding your dignity? For if all other women were bad, the light of your goodness so surpasses and transcends them that any remaining evil would vanish. Since God chose His spouse from among women, most excellent Lady, *because of your honor*, not only should men refrain from reproaching women but should also hold them in great reverence. (*Cité* 218, italics mine)

The *Cité* is about the honor of the female sex. This argument for women's worth

is two-fold. The first is the apparent argument that all women should be honored for being of the same sex as the Virgin. The second is the implicit point that Mary's inherent "honor," the virtue she already had as a *naturally* good person, is recognized by God in his choice of her as his spouse. Women, then, can not be inherently, or naturally, vile, for God to so honor a member of the sex.

Christine, in effect, again kicks the ladder out from under her--having shown that women are by nature and by grace good, she argues that women never should have needed a defense. These portraits of women change women's ontological status--constructing them as already good, and seen only as evil by "brazen" men. These women are "good" not by status, or ahistorical reputation, but instead, as Stecopoulos argues, because: "they are rendered noble through their recorded deeds--acts that demonstrate their possession of the feminine ideal..." (50).

CHAPTER IV  
TEACHING ETHOS: CHRISTINE DE PIZAN'S  
TRESOR DE LA CITE DES DAMES

Many upper division undergraduate and graduate students have been introduced to the history of rhetoric using Bizzell and Herzberg's *Rhetorical Tradition*. Yet I find the text's selections from the *Trésor de la cité des dames* to be potentially biased--the editors have included selections that subtly affirm a "proto-feminist" reading of Christine while they present her as deeply constrained by patriarchal society. I wish to briefly discuss this work's presentation of the *Trésor* to indicate the assumptions generally held about this conduct book for women's speech.

Bizzell and Herzberg depict Christine as an "exception," using that word twice, and focus on presenting her life and her politics. Their biographical sketch emphasizes the unique nature of her voice given the patriarchal culture that surrounded her. This presentation constructs her as a "feminist" exception to late medieval and early modern misogyny. Yet the editors's also present her as fundamentally capitulating to that patriarchy, which removes her from the ranks of feminist thinkers--she becomes merely a "proto-feminist." More disturbing still is that they did not discuss her characteristics as a rhetor or her thought as a rhetorician, which is odd because this text is intended for teaching the history of rhetoric. Finally, they attempt to affirm the "proto-feminist" reading of Christine by simply failing to include selections that would undermine the dominant, feminist stereotypes of early women writers. The editors include four selections from the *Trésor*, one from the first book, the other three from the

second book. The first book focuses on the proper conduct of a “princess”--any woman who is married to a politically powerful man--where the second book discusses, among other topics, the conduct of upper-class servants. The first selection is titled “How the good and wise princess will make every effort to restore peace between the prince and the barons if there is any discord” (488), and it presents wise princesses as their husbands’s humble servants who speak only in private and only to their husbands. The editors’s second selection discusses women’s slanders of their mistresses, which implicitly affirms the medieval stereotype of the garrulous female. The third selection argues for silence from servants if they are prone to slander and gossip, which implicitly affirms the modern stereotype of medieval and early modern women as thoroughly silenced by their society. The last selection delineates women’s appropriate decorum for restricting slanderous speech. The four selections present Christine’s *Trésor* as silencing, restrictive, and heavily domesticating of women’s voices. By taking these particular quotes out of their context, the editors’s inaccurately depict the text’s discussion of women’s use of speech, which, I believe, is an inaccurate presentation of her work, especially as an introduction of her work for students. In my discussion of *Trésor*, I will consider Christine’s use of rhetoric and her thoughts about rhetoric, which will implicitly show that their selections do a disservice to the text by presenting it more as repressive than as affirming of women’s speech.

Liliane Dulac, in an article published a few years after the *Rhetorical Tradition*, discusses the *Trésor* almost as a rhetoric. In particular, she sees it as a conduct book which focuses on appropriate models for feminine discourse (Dulac 130). The text discusses the decorum of women’s speech and the conduct required for establishing and maintaining a “good” reputation.

Christine, according to Dulac, is particularly concerned with women's individual reputations. For instance, Christine critiques ostentatious clothing no less than four times, and, of course, she includes the de rigueur warnings against violating sexual taboos. Dulac only discusses the first book of the *Trésor*, which is directed to noble ladies and the governesses of young noble ladies. For Dulac, the conduct expected of such women focuses on consistently improving one's reputation, which includes speaking well in private (Dulac 17), at court and in council (Dulac 17-18), and to women of higher authority (Dulac 18 ff). Dulac discusses particularly the instructions given to the governess of a noble lady, and presents fine, close readings of the rhetorical situations such a woman may expect and the rhetorical techniques she may employ. In Reno's translation of Dulac's article, the term "rhetoric" never appears. Yet Dulac speaks of feminine rhetoric as one of the primary themes of the text, saying that this theme is "the social importance and multiple resources of feminine speech," and arguing that the *Trésor* depicts "the art of persuasive language" (Dulac 21). Though the term "rhetoric" is appropriate to a reading of the *Trésor*, Reno's and Dulac's failure to use it indicates Dulac's perspective in her discussion: she claims that her reading is limited to the "fictive" world depicted in the book's many examples, and she asserts that the discussion of persuasion is not relevant to Christine's audience's actual use of language. I disagree with this limitation on her otherwise excellent reading: Christine repeatedly addresses her actual audience, ranging from the highest to the lowest classes. Despite Dulac's awareness of the connections Christine makes between an individual's reputation and her discourse, Dulac reads Christine's notion of speech as primarily a tool for improving reputation and social standing. She does not discuss this relationship from the other direction--the use of reputation to shape

a women's ethos given the stereotypes which predefine the audience's expectations of women rhetors. This chapter will look at Christine's *Trésor* from that other direction; I will especially look at Christine's advice for developing character and for using rhetorical techniques.

Christine's text is unusual, not only for being a rhetoric for women, but simply as a conduct book written by a woman for women. As Altman describes, the conduct books were commonly written by men for their wives and daughters, and these books focus on correcting disobedience instead of recommending successful behaviors:

Two well-known examples, contemporary with Christine, are the book of advice to his young wife by the Menagerie de Paris (c.1329-94) and the book of advice to his three daughters by Geoffrey de la Tour-Landry (1371). Both works emphasize obedience to her spouse as the chief wifely virtue. The Knight of Tour-Landry heartily recommends wife-beating as a cure for disobedience: in order to teach his daughters the importance of obedience, he tells two stories of women who were permanently disfigured by broken noses inflicted by justly annoyed husbands. Both authors assume that women are weaker than men and that they must be protected, even if protection entails force. Because of their moral weakness women should be sheltered from the corrupting influence of commerce with the world; because of their intellectual weakness they must also be kept ignorant to preserve their innocence. (Altman 15)

Women, as presented in the conduct books, verge on beasts who cannot be persuaded by reason, but only by force, which justifies wife beating.

Simultaneously, women are depicted as inherently prone to sin, which justifies a virtual imprisonment of women in order to protect them. Christine, in a disturbingly telling chapter, excuses women from implementing the conduct she recommends if they are so confined and abused. Christine's text, though, presents women's lives as more pleasant and as less repressed than the men's



conduct books present women's lives, and she includes the lives of lower class women in her depiction. In contrast to these conduct books, which justified violence to silence disobedient women, Christine says, writing to a baroness of a country estate: "She must be a good speaker, proud when pride is needed; circumspect with the scornful, surly, or rebellious; and charitably gentle and humble toward her good, obedient subjects" (*Trésor* 169). Christine expects such women to speak, and they are expected to present themselves as more than merely humble, silent, and obedient. More striking still is Christine's unspoken assumption that these women can assess their rhetorical situations accurately, though she does discuss the appropriate tone to take in those situations. Christine assumes that her women readers primarily need guidance in learning and using rhetorical techniques, not in recognizing the need for persuasion, especially those techniques that build the necessary reputation for inspiring trust in an audience.

Christine indicates that women, herself included, can and should appropriate several kinds of ethos positions given different rhetorical situations and different audiences. Her text discusses several kinds of ethos, but total silence and total humility are simply not among them. Her own speaking position, speaking again through the thin veil of the allegorical ladies Reason, Rectitude and Justice, and sometimes another character called Worldly Prudence, differs little from the ethos she establishes for herself for the *Cité*-- except that she is more a teacher in this text than in the former. She also expends much less effort in establishing her ethos, establishing it in one long passage:

After I built the City of Ladies with the aid and instruction of the three lady Virtues: Reason, Rectitude, and Justice,... I was worn out by the strenuous labor. My body was exhausted by such long and sustained

effort, and I was resting, idly, when suddenly the three radiant creatures appeared to men once more, saying: "Studious daughter! have you spurned and silenced the instrument of your intellect? Have you let your pen and ink dry out? Have you given up the labor of your hand which usually delights you? Are you willing to listen to the seductive song which Idleness sings to you? Surely you will hear it if you are willing to listen: 'You have done enough; you have earned your time of rest.' But remember what Seneca says: 'Although the wise one's intellect deserves repose after great effort, still a good mind should not neglect further good work.' Do not be distracted in the middle of your long journey! Shame on the knight who leaves the battle before victory! Only those who persist deserve the laurel crown. Now up, up! Lend a hand! Get ready! Stop crouching on this dust heap of fatigue! Obey our words, and your works will prosper....So may our preceding work, The City of Ladies, which is fine and useful, not only be blessed and praised throughout the world--but now may it grow further. Just as the wise birdman prepared his cage before trying to catch birds, we have prepared the bower for ladies. Now, with your help, we will devise and fabricate benevolent snares tied with knots of love to cover the ground where honored ladies and all sorts of women will walk. Even the shy and unwilling will be caught in our nets. None will be able to resist or escape, and all will be taken within the beneficent boundaries of our glorious city." (Trésor 69-70)

Although I have included almost the entire introduction of the Trésor, it is far less complex or lengthy than the beginning of the Cité. Christine relies on the ethos she established in and through their earlier work to carry over to this one: she is scholar, teacher, and woman. Hence she praises her own work, calling attention to it and her established ethos as an *auctor*. Also, she uses the introduction to present some of this text's major themes, including the attack on idleness and the irresistibility of her teachings. She announces her intention to teach the virtues so women can enter the allegorical City and indicates that the "ground" (subjects) these women will traverse include much on discourse. Christine also uses the structure of her text to establish her ethos. For instance, she politely follows proper decorum by speaking first to the highest class of women and moving down the social hierarchy.

The *Trésor* differs markedly from the *Cité*, which does not separate women into classes: the *Cité* sets out Christine's, and all women's, "class" as only their sex. This difference highlights the different perspectives of the two texts, for the *Cité* deals with stereotypes and the ontological status of women in the culture that fuels those stereotypes, where the *Trésor* deals with developing personal, individual reputations and speaking in appropriate styles. The allegorical ladies emphasize Christine's focus on her audience of "real" women who are directed to conduct their manners and speech according to Christine's guidelines:

As we have repeatedly stated, whatever we have said regarding virtues and the proper manner of life can pertain to any woman, whatever her estate. On these subjects, what is specifically suitable for some may also be suitable for others. Each can take from our teachings whatever she finds useful. (*Trésor* 185)

Christine's presentation of the lower class of women indicates her focus on real people, for she ranges beyond those women generally considered her appropriate audience to include all kinds of women. She also assumes, as she implicitly did in the *Cité*, that her audience can think for itself, and that women, of high or low class, can decide the degree to which they can apply her advice. From these depictions of her own good reputation and her respectful presentation of her material, she presents her own ethos as reasonable, respectful, and, like any good teacher, persuasive.

When speaking of good women's use of rhetoric, Christine first discusses the necessity for being virtuous in order to have a good reputation. She asserts that:

Good reputation is the greatest treasure a princess or noble lady can acquire.... Like the odor of sanctity, good repute is sweet fragrance form

the body wafting across the world so that everyone is aware of it. The fragrance of good repute thus goes forth from a worthy person so that everyone else may sense her good example. (*Trésor* 91)

A princess will discover that "...if she does not lead a life of reputation and praise through doing good, she lacks honor regardless of the blandishments of her entourage to suggest that she has it. True honor must be above reproach" (*Trésor* 90). A "good" reputation reflects the sincerely held ethical beliefs of a truly noble lady as perceived by her potential audience. Though Dulac rightly notes that Christine acknowledges that a good woman's reputation may derived from "seeming" good to others (Dulac 17), Christine does not problematize the possible relationships between seeming and being. The structure of Christine's text indicates that, for her, only truly good women can seem to be good. She begins her text with a series of lessons on virtue, asserting that the other lessons on discourse and reputation rely on first being truly virtuous. Though Christine even posits the notion of a "just hypocrisy" as possibly necessary for developing a good reputation, she consistently assumes that a good reputation only comes from good works, not unwarranted deception, ostentation, or pride. The princess is hypocritical only in her need to have her good works, including her association with virtuous citizens, noted not only by God but by her people.

Yet only performing good works will not, to Christine's mind, establish a woman's reputation. As Dulac mentions, Christine argues that the truly noble princess must behave appropriately, exhibiting both Christian and social virtues. Christine privileges Christian virtues, asserting that the noble princess must be humbly and devoutly Christian: "Women of high estate, please do not be ashamed to humble yourselves by taking lowly seats to hear our lesson; for, according to God's word, the humble shall be exalted" (*Trésor* 71). Christine

also expects these women to thoroughly examine their motives and to chastise themselves harshly when motivated by temptation:

What will the good princess do when she finds herself so tempted? Love and fear of Our Lord will sing [to] her [this] lesson: "Foolish idler? What are you thinking of? Have you forgotten what you know about yourself? Don't you remember that you are only a wretched, frail creature, subject to idleness, maladies, passions, and pains inherent in all mortal bodies? What advantage do you have over another human being? A ball of clay covered with rich cloth is worth little more than a ball of clay under rags. Inclined to sin and every possible vice, you, wretched creature, deceive yourself into forgetting that your feeble vessel, yearning after honor and ease, will decline and die. Soon it will be food for worms, decaying in the dust as readily as any indigent woman's body. The released soul will carry away only the good or evil works that the feeble body has done on earth....You foolish, simple, ridiculous little woman! You have no force, power, or authority other than what is given to you by someone else, namely the Lord. Nevertheless, seeing yourself surrounded by luxury and honors you think you can trample on the world and dominate it according to your will." (*Trésor* 73, 77)

I have elided over several pages of these corrections spoken by the good princess to herself in response to temptation: she critiques most harshly people who fall prey to pride, but she includes attacks on the other six deadly sins. This princess concludes her reflections with the realization that she must "love and fear" God, and she recognizes that, despite any virtues she does have, "she must consider herself the least worthy" of human beings (*Trésor* 82). This humility, as a response to the sin of pride, does not resemble the humility topos—which functions as an apologia for breaching gender decorum surrounding women's speech. Instead this humility is simply the common notion of Christian humility, and Christine's discussion of this humility merely affirms the role. The good princess, Christine notes, is precariously placed because pride can easily tempt her:

The most significant in the eyes of God is not the most honored on earth, but whoever is most just on earth will be exalted in Heaven. Since the good princess knows that honors generally inflate pride yet befit her husband's status and her own authority, she will direct her heart toward humility, protecting it from damage by arrogance and puffery by pride. (*Trésor* 83)

Christine also excuses the good princess's wealth, so long as that wealth is handled ethically: "When God says that it is impossible for the rich to be saved, he means the rich without virtue; those who do not distribute their wealth in alms; those whose only pleasure is in their possessions" (*Trésor* 82). The primary Christian virtues recommended for the good princess are humility and generosity, without which the princess will be neither virtuous nor persuasive.

Reason, Rectitude and Justice, who present the Christian virtues, are joined by Worldly Prudence, who teaches social ethics and the creation of reputation, or "honor" (*Trésor* 90). Along with honor, Christine posits that other secular virtues are necessary for noble women:

This noble lady's great constancy, courage, and force of character will not heed the darts of the envious. If she learns of frivolous slander against her, as happens every day to the best of people no matter how great they are, she will not be troubled nor take offense but will pardon readily....[T]his humble lady will question whether she could have offended in any manner.... [T]he princess contemplating all this will be so merciful toward everyone that she will suffer for them as for herself. (*Trésor* 84)

As a constant, courageous, merciful, humble and thoughtful woman, this princess accepts the human foibles of slander and envy without anger, and contemplates the possible truth of any gossip. Her resulting ethos is of an even-tempered and compassionate woman who reasonably reflects on the problems she faces. This woman will be helpful, financially and physically, to those in

need (*Trésor* 84), will teach her ladies-in-waiting good habits, will read conduct and devotional books, will listen to sermons by virtuous clerics (*Trésor* 93), and will work to make her marriage happy, including having her husband's confessor correct her husband instead of correcting him herself (*Trésor* 97-100). Lower class women are directed to apply these virtues where appropriate and affordable. Christine specifically advises ladies-in-waiting against slander and insists on their loyalty to their mistress (*Trésor* 162, 167), and she advises religious women to practice seven particular virtues: "...first is obedience, the foundations of all others; second, humility; third, sobriety; fourth, patience; fifth, solicitude; sixth, chastity; seventh, benevolence and concord" (*Trésor* 180).

Unlike most conduct books common at the time, which typically stressed women's thorough domestication, Christine presents secular virtues which stress a woman's interactions with her community. Though occasionally repressive, silencing, and domesticating, this text generally emphasizes the public display of virtuous behaviors which will inspire trust, affection, good will, and a good reputation. These virtues are, in the main, flexible: they are not rigid rules designed to strictly limit behaviors. A woman is not told, for instance, that she must be always silent, nor is she told to be virginal, but simply chaste. Even the virtue of obedience recommended for nuns is only rigid to an extent--such a woman is expected to be obedient depends on her vows and her continuing acceptance of them. These virtues, especially the ones discussed for the princess, permit a variety of characteristics for a woman's ethos given her rhetorical situation and her personality.

Having delineated the necessary virtues for a good woman, Christine discusses the variety of reputations available to her. Christine highlights the relationship between the princess's personality and potential reputation during

her presentation of the good woman's internal debate about leading a contemplative or active life. Given Christine's proclivity for study, she celebrates the contemplative life as the better of the two:

The contemplative life is a manner and a state of serving God wherein one loves Our Lord so greatly and so ardently that she totally forgets father, mother, children, everyone, even herself, because of the great, consuming thought she devotes to her Creator. She never thinks of other things; nothing else is important to her. No poverty, tribulation, nor suffering (which, indeed, might damage another) hinders her heart, the heart of the true contemplative. Her manner of life completely disdains everything in the world and all its fleeting joys. She remains solitary, apart from others, knees to the ground, joined hands pointing heavenward, heart raised up in such elevated thought that in her contemplations she ascends to the presence of God. Through divine inspiration she sees the Holy Trinity, and the Court of Heaven and all its joys....[T]his is the way, above all others, manifestly agreeable to God. (*Trésor* 79)

Her celebration of the contemplative life continues for a few more paragraphs; nevertheless, she presents the active life as equally devoted to God:

The active life is the other way of serving God. The one following this way is so charitable that if she could, she would serve all for the love of God. So she serves in hospitals, visiting the sick and the poor, aiding with her own wealth and her own efforts, generously, for the love of God....She seeks her neighbor's good as if it were her own; and since she always is striving to do good, she never is idle. Such a woman bears all trials and tribulations patiently for the love of Our Lord. (*Trésor* 80)

Such discussions of the active and contemplative lifestyles were typical in medieval thought. Yet Christine rejects the polarity often attributed to the two; she constructs a middling lifestyle appropriate to the good princess's personality and responsibilities:

You must then decide which of these two ways you will follow[, s]o the good princess inspired by God speaks to herself. Discretion truly is



called the mother of Virtue. Why the mother? Because she conducts and leads, and the one who fails to follow her finds that enterprises without her come to nothing and are worthless. Therefore, I must work discreetly. Why discretion? Before I undertake anything, I must consider first of all the strength or weakness of my own body and my fragility. Then I weigh the demands I must balance in this human state to which God has committed me.... I could not leave husband, children, my worldly state, and all earthly preoccupations with the intention of serving God completely in the contemplative life, as the most perfect human beings have done. I must not try to do what I know I would be inadequate for.... Therefore, since I conclude that I am not strong enough to follow either of these paths, at least I will try the middle way, as Saint Paul advises, and select from each path as much of the best as I am able. (*Trésor* 81-82)

As Christine indicates, the decision about what kind of life to lead is the princess's to make. Yet she assumes that the good princess's virtuous lifestyle combines contemplation and action; prayer and study are mixed with good deeds. The *Trésor*, following this model of the good life and this woman's personality, focuses on the appropriate activities for such a woman, though Christine liberally recommends various prayers. This compromise, and the behaviors which extend from it, construct a third, acceptable reputation for the good woman's lifestyle: along with active and contemplative lifestyles now belong this mixture of the two.

Derived from Christine's depiction of the noble woman's lifestyle and personality, the reputation for the good princess's speech varies from private to public. I have already noted in my discussion of Bizzell and Herzberg's selections that Christine advocates very private uses of speech, even silence when necessary. Yet Christine primarily discusses women's public use of persuasive speech, especially when used to resolve a public need. For instance, the good princess is directed to be an advocate for peace, which is not surprising given that Christine lived in a violent time. Women were

instructed to intervene in both the troubles between their husbands and their subjects or between their husbands and other rulers. When a princess is called upon to make peace between her husband's most lowly subject and him, she is directed to listen to the subject's concerns with patience:

Through charity, this great lady will be the advocate of peace between the prince, her husband (or her son, if she is a widow), and her people, those to whom she has a duty to offer her assistance. If the prince, because of poor advice or for any other reason, should be tempted to harm his subjects, they will know their lady to be full of kindness, pity, and charity. They will come to her, humbly petitioning her to intercede for them before the prince. Poor and unable to request it themselves, they will merit the lady's clemency. (*Trésor* 84)

The good woman becomes a mediator and advocate, which adds that role to her reputation. Her established virtue earns the trust of her people and justifies her ethos in her petition to her husband. Though her rhetoric would be practiced in private with her lord, the justification and need are both public.

More public still are the times when a woman sues for peace to her lord's council, especially when she mediates between her lord and a neighboring prince, or between her lord and his nobles. She is expected to be motivated by her horror of war and is directed to use her knowledge of her lord's men and of rhetoric in order to preserve the peace:

If any neighboring or foreign prince wars for any grievance against her lord, or if her lord wages war against another, the good lady will weigh the odds carefully. She will balance the great ills, infinite cruelties, losses, deaths, and destruction to property and people against the war's outcome, which is usually unpredictable. She will seriously consider whether she can preserve the honor of her lord and yet prevent the war. Working wisely and calling on God's aid, she will strive to maintain peace. So also, if any prince of the realm or the country, or any baron, knight, or powerful subject should hold a grudge against her lord, or if he is involved in any such quarrel and she foresees that her lord to take a prisoner or make a battle would lead to trouble in the land, she will strive

toward peace.... Mindful of such terrible possibilities, the good lady will strive to avoid destruction of her people, making peace and urging her lord (the prince) and his council to consider the potential harm inherent in any martial adventure. Furthermore, she must remind him that every good prince should avoid shedding blood, especially that of his subjects....Thus, always saving both her own honor and her lord's, the good lady will not rest until she has spoken..., alternately soothing and reproving them....Woman by nature is more gentle and circumspect. Therefore, if she has sufficient will and wisdom she can provide the best possible means to pacify men....The gentle tongue (which means the soft word) bends and breaks harshness. (*Trésor* 85-86)

This feminine use of speech closely resembles a man's use of rhetoric; it is public, spoken to equals, and deliberative, though its use reflects her nature as gentle and circumspect. For Christine, women's gender leads them to advocate for peace, and yet those gentle natures do not preclude them from the public forum. Noble women are directed to speak to their lords, their subjects, or to any man who may help prevent war: "the wise lady will be such a good mediator by her prudent conduct and her knowledge that she will succeed in appeasing all factions" (*Trésor* 121). The characteristics of the good princess's ethos emphasizes precisely the opposite readings suggested by Bizzell and Herzberg's selections, for these princesses are active, public mediators between warring parties who persuade rulers and deliberate about profound social issues.

Christine's depictions of women's public speech does focus on the noble women, yet, as Dulac thoroughly discussed in her article, Christine also closely explains a governess's ethos with her young, royal charge. When a governess teaches her mistress, she is directed to

... not appear to be giving examples, only recounting adventures. By telling these stories well, she will touch her mistress' heart, as well as that of others who may be hearing her who have gathered around her to listen. (*Trésor* 127)

By pleasing the princess, the governess simultaneously wins her trust, gains influence over her, and teaches virtue: these acts, which establishes the governess as personally liked by the princess, are influential with her. Yet the governess's influence, despite her good reputation, will likely have limits. For instance, the princes may stray into an illicit love affair which the governess may not be able to prevent with kindness. In such a situation, the governess is directed to take her leave of the princess, moving far enough away to protect her own reputation. The governess is then directed to send a chastising letter to the princess. Part of the letter, which Christine includes in full, argues that the princess should

Realize that my great affection and my desire for your honor's continuity and your renown's excellence move me to caution you. My lady, I have heard rumors concerning your conduct which grieve me to the bottom of my heart. I fear the loss of your good name. (*Trésor* 140)

The governess's ethos in the letter is derived from the sincerity of her affection and her concern for the princess, and that ethos permits her to chastise the princess. Not only does Christine again emphasize the importance of a good reputation for both the rhetor and the ruler, she indicates that a social inferior can speak sternly to her social superior if the lower class woman has a good reputation.

Christine discusses the specific techniques for developing and using feminine ethos, and she directs the discussion, like her comments on virtue and reputation, to the upper class, though many of the techniques can be used by members of the lower classes. These particular kinds of personal reputations are potentially available to any woman: women can be known for leading an active or contemplative lives, for speaking persuasively in public and private, and for acting as advocates, mediators, petitioners, and teachers. Christine

discusses specific techniques for establishing ethos under five loose topics: negative examples, the good princess's associates, her treatment of her servants, her responses to her enemies, and her presentation of particular virtues through appropriate behaviors.

One warning Christine gives against an evil woman's unethical use of rhetoric occurs during the internal debate of the tempted princess at the beginning of the text. Temptation argues that the princess, to convince people to obey her will, should

Therefore, amass treasure to carry out your intentions. Money is women's best friend and the surest means to any possible end. Who would dare disobey you when you freely distribute gifts? Even if you give only a little, people still will serve you willingly in the hope of receiving more later. After all, you would have the reputation for great wealth. Only the dead fail to reach out with both hands. Dispense for gain, no matter who may be harmed or displeased by it. You know you can do this every well if you put mind to it. Who cares what others may say? Talkers cannot harm you....Nobody has a good life beyond what she provides for herself. (*Trésor* 72-73)

Willard's translation of the *Trésor* highlights the pun on a "good" life--as pleasurable or as virtuous--in the princess's thoughts about buying a good reputation. The evil princess's selfishness justifies her greed and pride and structures the ethos she creates for herself. As with the good princess, Christine assumes a direct relationship between one's ethos and one's ethics: she also assumes that corruption cannot be hidden for long. The evil princess purchases affection and must ignore the talk against her; in contrast, the good princess's behaviors inspire trust, affection, and good will, which is supported by the talk about her. The negative example here is, to a degree, obvious: a good reputation, and so a good ethos, is earned, not bought. Yet the negative example reflects one problem Christine had in the *querelle*: marginalized

speakers can not control, ultimately, their ethos because it reflects not only their actions, but their audience's assumptions. With the evil princess, the gossip about her prevents her from being truly perceived as trustworthy, despite temptation's assertion that this princess need not concern herself with other's gossip. For Christine, a good reputation necessitates positive, honest appraisals of the rhetor by other good people.

Not surprisingly, Christine speaks at length about the necessity for the noble lady to associate with good people, including making friends and having ethical ladies-in-waiting and servants. Her friends are needed for their support and good will, while her morally upstanding entourage will reflect well on her. When Christine discusses the people the noble lady should befriend, she indicates the specific benefits she may derive from those associations. The bourgeoisie, for instance, may loan her money when she needs it:

Occasionally she ought to call to her presence the most important citizens of her lord's cities and towns, as well as certain important merchants and even some of the most respected artisans. Receiving them well, she must pragmatically cultivate their good will so that if even she is in difficulty they will support her. If she should find herself in need of money, for example, she could request the merchants' help, which would be forthcoming willingly and benevolently. (*Trésor* 110)

By ingratiating herself with these men she can rely on them to support her. In the same manner, she will win the good will of her lord's barons, which may prevent rebellions and could be a military resource if a rebellion occurs (*Trésor* 121). She will also carefully cultivate the clergy:

This...teaching requires her to be in the good standing and good graces of the clergy, the religious orders, the counselors, the monks, the doctors, the bourgeoisie, and even the people....[T]hey will praise her in sermons and other public discourses, so that their voices can be a necessary shield and defense against the murmurs and false reports of her jealous

defamers. Perhaps their words might silence the gossips; consequently, she would be in better repute with her husband as well as with the common folk. Hearing their lady well spoken of, the more powerful among them might sustain her if she should ever need their help. (Trésor 107-108)

As aides to gaining and maintaining the good will of her husband and her people, the clergy can shape and defend her reputation. Unlike her associations with other groups, she will win the clergy's support by following its advice. The result of the princess's kind and caring associates, according to Christine, will be to secure her people's affection, which is the surest defense: "There is no city or fortress so well defended, so strong and powerful, as one protected by the love and good will of loyal subjects" (Trésor 18). Interestingly, these particular techniques of building a good reputation--friendliness and taking advise--are the same techniques for securing one's authority.

Yet the trust of the citizenry would be shattered if the good princess's associates at court were less than virtuous. Her entourage reflect on her, and so they should be ethical and able to assist her in her own good deeds (Trésor 87). Her almoner and herself will, for instance, minister to the emotional and financial needs of the poor and ill (Trésor 88). Her ladies especially will protect their own honor as a means of protecting hers (Trésor 155):

Her ladies should conduct themselves with decorum among knights, squires, and other men. They should speak simply and quietly, without coquetry and effrontery, as they amuse themselves in dancing and diversions. Certainly they should not be foolish, bold, or loud in their speech, countenance, or laughter....Above all, [the lady-in-waiting] will strive to protect her own honor in both word and deed, even more behind her lady's back than in her presence. Thus she will promote her lady's good name....The more she employs the sort of distant dignity so becoming to a woman, the greater respect men will show her. (Trésor 112-113, 151, 157)

With quiet dignity, the ladies-in-waiting will earn men's respect and that respect will then be reflected back onto the good princess. Like the governess, these ladies may even protect the princess's honor more than she does herself:

[T]he good, loyal lady, demoiselle, or other courtier, wishing to preserve a good conscience and loving the welfare and honor of her mistress, will act in this manner if she sees her lady's honor diminished or endangered: If she does not dare to speak with her directly or admonish her for her own good, she will go only to her mistress's confessor. There, secretly, in confession, she can tell what is being said about her mistress, the peril in which she is placing herself, and the harm which might come of it. Then she will beg the confessor for God's sake to point out all this to her mistress and not say anything more about it. (*Trésor* 166)

Also, like the good wife, who has her husband's confessor admonish him for her, the princess's good ladies will ask the confessor to admonish her, which will prevent bickering among them (*Trésor* 167 ff). If the good princess is threatened with immediate loss of her good name:

[T]he good servant will protect her from all perils and defend her as if she were her own child. One lady was saved from being discovered in a compromising situation by her maid-in-waiting, who, when she realized the danger, immediately set fire to the grange so that everyone, thus distracted, would run in that direction and her mistress could escape from her awkward predicament. (*Trésor* 154)

These women earn and maintain honor, protecting the mistress's reputation and assisting her in her work to maintain the trust of her people, even when the lady may not deserve that protection. Christine's discussion about a princess's relationship with her servants resembles her recommendations to lower class women concerning their treatment of their retainers. A baroness, for instance, is instructed to act consistently with her men-at-arms, while a housewife is instructed to not shout at her servants (*Trésor* 170, 189 respectively). By



establishing good relationship with good people, women earn the trust of their servants and their neighbors and so influence them.

If a lady retaliates against her enemies, she is likely to lose her good name. So Christine suggests specific techniques for handling one's enemies:

...if the princess knows that particular powerful people do not wish her well or would harm her if they could (such as removing her from the love and grace of her lord, who possibly might believe their malicious blandishment and flatteries), or that these connivers gladly would slander her through false reports of barons, vassals, or commoners, then she should appear not to notice and not to consider these people her enemies. Rather, by showing them an unsuspecting and cheerful countenance, she will lead them to believe that she esteems them and never could judge them otherwise, for she apparently trusts them more than others. This appearance must be so well controlled and so discreetly and cleverly acted that no one will perceive it is all pretense. (*Trésor* 105)

Of all of Christine's suggested techniques, this dissimulation is the most potentially unethical: she barely justifies it as a means of peace-keeping and self-preservation. With a woman's enemies, pretense and dissimulation are justified, in Christine's mind, so long as the goal is to win their good will, so long as the dissimulation maintains the peace in the the court and community, and so long as it prevents false reports from troubling her marriage.

The good princess will behave virtuously whenever possible. In the main,

her life will pivot around two particular points. One is the morals she will observe and abide by, and the other is the style of life which will direct her. Two moral considerations are especially necessary for women who desire honor, for without them it is unattainable: namely Sobriety and Chastity. (*Trésor* 91)

For instance, a sober woman will avoid ostentatious clothing as "frivolous" (*Trésor* 91-92). Her ethos, as a merciful, authoritative, sober and

compassionate woman, is established through her actions: "People's intentions cannot be judged except by their acts, which when good, give evidence of good thought and personal virtue; the opposite is likewise true" (*Trésor* 101).

Reputation is shaped by a woman's good behaviors for her actions indicate her character. One of these behaviors is careful listening: a woman who sits in council is instructed to listen carefully to her counselors, and the baroness is instructed to listen to her husband's men when they tell of their valor in battle (*Trésor* 95-96, 100-101 respectively). Yet most of the specific behaviors Christine discusses relate to Christian, instead of social, virtues. Princesses, who must accept homage, for instance, are warned to be humble: similarly,

the active lady leaving the chapel will personally, with humility and devotion, give alms with her own hands, showing by her actions that she does not despise the poor. Any requests for mercy or aid she will listen to kindly, reply graciously, and immediately attend to those which can be fulfilled. By so doing, she will enhance not only the gift but her own reputation. (*Trésor* 95)

These behaviors indicate both her humility and mercy, of course, yet they confirm her just use of her authority as well: she can and does attend to the problems raised by her people. Such attentiveness will strengthen the people's loyalty to her and her lord.

Like the classical works on delivery, Christine recognizes the effects of gestures and vocal quality on an audience:

Though the dignity of her position requires this noble princess to receive homage from others, she will not take undue pleasure when it is rendered to her. She will avoid it whenever possible. Her manner, her bearing, and her speech will be gentle and kindly, her face friendly, her eyes lowered. Returning greetings to all who greet her, she will be so humane and courteous that her words will be pleasing to God and to all the world. (*Trésor* 83)

Her gestures and bearing indicate the sincerity of her humility, while her friendliness encourage her people's trust. Her prudence and sobriety will fashion many of her gestures and much of her speech:

Prudence and Sobriety teach a lady well-ordered speech and wise eloquence. She never will be coy, but will speak well-considered words, soft and rather low-pitched, uttered with a pleasant face and without excessive motion of the hands or body, nor facial grimaces. She will avoid excessive or uncalled-for laughter. Refraining from speaking ill of others, she will not blame, but rather will encourage goodness. Gladly she will keep in check vague and dishonest words, nor will she permit others to speak them to her. Her humor will also be discreet. In the midst of her entourage, the princess will speak a virtuous language of good example, so that those who listen to her directly, as well as those who hear later reports, will perceive that her words come from her goodness, wisdom, and honesty. Never speaking ungraciously to her companions or servants, nor quarreling or speaking viciously, instead she will instruct her household retainers and friends gently, correcting their shortcomings softly, politely, threatening to expel them if they do not reform, punishing them in a quiet voice without being needlessly unkind. Crude brutality from the mouth of a lady or, indeed, any woman turns more against herself than against the one to whom it is addressed. moreover, her commands must be reasonable for the time and place, as well as suitable for the person receiving them, each according to his own proper duty. (*Trésor* 92-93)

The specific rhetorical techniques here will be applied by the good woman speaker at need and in accordance with her personality and limitations. Using these techniques, Christine asserts that good women speakers can, in effect, enter the *Cité*, that they can appropriate Christine's redefined stereotypes of the good woman as the basis for their own ethos.

The three defenses of women I have discussed in these three chapters--the defense of women against literary misogyny in the *querelle*, the redefinition and defense of worthy women's ontological status in the *Cité*, and the defense of, and instructions in, women's speech in the *Trésor*--all indicate that women's

ethos appeals are constructed by them in tandem with their community. Repeatedly, Christine's thoughts about a woman's persuasive speech is impinged upon by the stereotypes an audience will have about a woman speaker. Yet the interactions among stereotypes, reputation, and style as part of Christine's ethos may be limited solely to Christine's work. In the second section of this dissertation I will consider ethos in the somewhat similar rhetorical situation of Renaissance Englishwomen's defenses of women, discussing first the relationship between ethos and stereotype, then reputation, and finally style, too look at the way they impinge on these women's ethos appeals.

## CHAPTER V

## ETHOS AND STEREOTYPES IN EARLY MODERN WOMEN'S PAMPHLETS

Across the channel, and over a hundred and fifty years later, another woman wrote in defense of women. Jane Anger, in her *Protection for Women* (1587), responded to the conventions of literary misogyny in the, now lost, *Boke His Surfeit*. Anger's text exhibits no direct influences from the continental *querelle des femmes*, which Joan Kelly argues was an outgrowth from the *querelle de la Rose*, nor does Anger's text show any influence from the *Cité des dames*, even though that text had been translated and printed in England early in the century. Despite the popularity of Christine's unusual defense of women as women, Anger received no benefit from Christine's work: even though the ground had been cultivated by Christine, Anger's work effectively clears virgin land. As Gerda Lerner has shown in her exhaustive history of Western European women's thought about women, Anger's circumstance was not unusual. Repeatedly women thinkers, speakers, and writers were unaware of their intellectual foremothers and were perceived by their contemporaries as either unique or rare exceptions, and so were seen as generally irrelevant to the man's world of scholarship, philosophy and literary art. Even when more than one such woman lived at the same time, the pair would be dismissed as flukes, though often the dismissal would be couched as flattery.

Given the masculinist culture of scholarship, it is not surprising that Anger's own work was either lost or ignored by the time of the next polemical debate about women. In this next battle, however, more than one female voice spoke in defense of women. Rachel Speght, Ester Sowernam, and Constantia

Munda refuted, rejected and righteously railed against Joseph Swetnam's *Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward and Inconstant Women* (1617), and all of them wrote, in quick succession, against him. Sowernam and Munda do have the benefit of Speght's work, yet none of them refer to either Anger or Christine. Though each of these rhetorical situations differed--even Anger's and Speght's situations are separated by thirty years and the death of the ruling, female monarch--they resemble each other in being, effectively, the "first" defense of women by women because their predecessors were forgotten. I selected these Renaissance texts precisely because their authors resemble Christine in their lack of a precedent, and so they all garner similar expectations in their audiences. In each case their written defenses are, effectively, an unheard-of breach of gender decorum. Speght's work was beneficial to Sowernam and Munda, and they draw heavily on their predecessor, yet the rapid succession of these texts allowed for little adjustment in their audience's expectations. Other defenses of women by women in polemical prose followed these texts, as, for example, the satirical treatise by Mary Tattle-well and Joan Hit-him-home. Yet this later text draws on the Swetnam controversy: a precedent had been established, which fundamentally changed the rhetorical situation.

Even as I assert that Anger, Sowernam, and Munda wrote as women, I find I must qualify the claim. Although the historical record identifies Rachel Speght, there are no records which directly establish the identities of the other three authors. Given the endemic misogyny, modern critics have not been surprised that these writers signed their pamphlets with pseudonyms, in order to obscure their identities. Though all these names are gender-marked as female, the identity of Anger, Sowernam, and Munda is uncertain. Because of the obscurity of these writer's real selves, as Diane Purkiss argues:

[W]e recognize in these texts ... the processing of woman as a theatrical role or masquerade which can never be equated with an essential woman or audible authorial voice but which, rather, troubles the very existence of such a self-identical figure. These are texts which cannot be put easily into...categories of authentic voicing; instead, they are texts where the metaphors used to naturalize the gender systems of early modern England are both assaulted and upheld. (Purkiss 69)

Recognizing that we are limited in our knowledge of the actual lives of these "women" writers, my study in this chapter of Renaissance expectations of women will assess the stereotypes that the discourse community held about women generally, and, from that context, I will derive the expectations of these female writers's ethos positions.<sup>1</sup>

Those community stereotypes which are potentially relevant to these pamphlets are derived from both the court and the bourgeois. As Pamela Benson Joseph, in her study of women in Renaissance humanist philosophy and thought, argues, a reading of these popular texts as primarily humanist or courtly would be inaccurate:

In England in the years between the publication of Elyot's *Defense* (1540) and the death of Elizabeth (1603), humanist thought about womankind is clearly evident in the serious analysis of the relations between the sexes in marriage manuals, in the numerous long and densely argued tracts that were written in defense of Elizabeth's rule, and in translations of Continental works as Capella's *Della Eccellenza* and Agrippa's *De nobilitate*. It is almost entirely absent from the debate about women as it appears in original works in English writers for the popular press....[T]hese native English works do not challenge the traditional valuation of women on the basis of their sexual purity; they employ the rhetorical methods of paradox; nor do they engage in a serious analysis of woman's social role as defined by the classical authorities Plato, Aristotle, the pseudo-Aristotelian *Economics*, and Xenophon. (Benson 205-206)

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<sup>1</sup> Because I read these "women" from their gendered speaking position, I will regularly refer to them as women.

Benson notes several differences between popular and courtly defenses of women. Yet she uses those differences to bifurcate the two discourse communities. This bifurcation assumes that the Renaissance pamphlet readers were not also participants in the discourse community of the court. Though much of the courtly literature was circulated in manuscript, and so was not likely to reach the lower classes, the pamphlet writers still appealed to the members of the court (Clark 22); the court and the bourgeoisie shared other, similar expectations about the nature of women (Dunn 31; Henderson and McManus 113); and Middleton, as well as other playwrights, critiqued the "activity and boldness" of "middle class" women (Wright 466). A relatively tenuous connection did exist between the court and the middle class discourse communities. Nevertheless, as Clark explains, the "new mass" of pamphlet literature "testifies to the existence of tastes and values significantly different from those catered to by writers like Sidney and Spenser, tastes and values which appeared for the first time in this period" (Clark 22). One such different taste is for women writing polemics, which "hard-headed businessmen would print...[indicating] that they were popular with the reading public" (Travitsky 254). So the court and the pamphleteers existed in partially overlapping discourse communities, neither fully the same or completely different. As such, the expectations of women in the court may resemble the expectations of this middle-class "new kind of reader" for whom the pamphleteers wrote (Clark 22), yet the expectations of woman delineated by Renaissance humanism and court poetry only partially accounts for the expectations of women held by bourgeois readers.

These new readers were literate but not necessarily sophisticated (Clark 18), and the works they read reflected that lack of sophistication by being



riddled with stock subjects, stereotypes, and commonplace arguments. Criticizing stock subjects, such as social climbers, foreigners, atheists, and women, was common (Clark 177). Whether the pamphleteers depicted women positively or negatively, the pamphlets were fundamentally conservative. They reinforced already accepted stereotypes of women (Benson 206), whether derived from antiquity (Henderson and McManus 24) or from medieval complaints (Rutherford 177). The debate about women was also conventional: though the debate occurred in various genres intended for various audiences, the writers repeated many of the same themes, figures, tropes, motifs, and citations (Jordon 2; Clark 37). Even the terms “pamphlet” and “book” were conventionally both a designation of size and of quality: “‘Pamphlet’ was often an unflattering term; a writer used it of his own productions in a spirit of humility or obsequiousness, of the work of others when he wished to scorn or belittle” (Clark 23). The repetition of old jokes (Henderson and McManus 47) and well-recognized authorities, as a “rhetoric of citation” (Purkiss 72), endowed the pamphlet writers with credibility by appealing to their audience’s sense of humor or by appealing to the authority of the work cited. As a conservative and conventional genre, the pamphlet form determined the appropriate range of rhetoric and thought used in it. Not surprisingly, when the debate about women occurs in the pamphlets, the possible definitions of women’s social, political or legal status are not fundamentally challenged, and so are not “feminist” in the modern sense. Instead, these pamphlets were more like epideictic writings, which are persuasive, as Aristotle explains, primarily because they affirm the community’s beliefs (Aristotle, I.9, 1366A 20-35). The “virtues,” then, that women pamphleteers could appropriate for their ethos were constrained in the pamphlet form to the stereotypes of the “good” woman.

Unfortunately for a woman writer, one of those stereotypical virtues associated with the good woman was silence (Neely 214; Jones 187): others were piety (Henderson and McManus 49, 65; Bornstein x-xi), obedience (Neely 214; Jordon 22, 32, 45-46; Jones 187; Bornstein x-xi), and chastity (Henderson and McManus 49, 65; Neely 214; Jones 187; Kelly 21). These women pamphleteers defended their speech by arguing that their particular rhetorical circumstance justified their breach of gender decorum. In each case, the women pamphleteers argued that the attacks on women were virulent or offensive enough to justify any woman's angry response; as Jane Anger says, "Shall such surfeiters rails on our kindness, you [women] stand still and say naught...?" (Anger 32).<sup>2</sup> By voicing surprise at the failure of women to voice outrage, Anger performs several rhetorical moves at the same time: she affirms other women's anger, she justifies her own writing as an expression of many women's (silenced) responses, and she questions the virtue of silence as an expectation of women's behavior in such circumstances. Yet all of these women pamphleteers also affirmed silence as a rhetorical ornament for women—even Jane Anger, who argues most strenuously among these writers for the virtue of women's speech, still speaks of "our honest bashfulness" (Anger 33) as an appropriate and innate female virtue. These writers also comment on the other stereotypical virtues of the "good" woman: Rachel Speght depicts and redefines wifely obedience (Speght 72); Ester Sowernam enumerates several holy and pious women (Sowernam 96-97); and Constantia Munda affirms the goodness of "chaste and modest virgins" (Munda 134). So, usually, these writers accept and reiterate women's conventional social virtues, which affirms several of the audience's expectations about women.

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<sup>2</sup> All citations to the pamphlets are from Shephard's edition of them, in which he modernized the texts.

Nevertheless, these women affirmed women as innately “good.” Their challenges to the negative definition of their ontological status were often formed as either a “fable,” as Aristotle described such evidence (II. 20, 1393b5-30), or as resistant readings of the Bible’s misogynistic claims. Anger uses the fable: she tells of two “wise” men of Gotham--a name that connotated folly (Shepherd 49)--and humorously exposes these wise men as half-wits. One wise man howls bitterly, for instance, upon being offered a kercher from his confused, though supposedly still wise, friend (Anger 40). The brief parable ends with the two men seeking out the assistance of one of the many wise women that they know (Anger 40). Anger follows this fable with another of Aristotle’s forms of evidence, a maxim: she says that an “old parable” is that “the wit of a woman is a great matter,” implying that the “greatness” is in the quality of women’s wit, not its mysteriousness to men (Anger 41). Aristotle notes that the fable and the maxim are particularly appropriate when addressing a popular audience, and maxims are especially persuasive because they require little thought and usually affirm some observation that the audience already believes (II 21, 1395b1-20). Though Anger’s maxim does not affirm an already accepted belief, its construction as an “old saying” attempts to persuade the audience to accept the maxim as an already accepted truth. As such, the fable and maxim undermine the ontological status of “good” women, depicting them as innately wise.

Yet, as Aristotle notes, an argument from fables is not as powerful as one derived from accepted past “facts” (II 20, 1394a1-10). Though Biblical evidence was challenged in the period as not necessarily “factual,” it still retained much of the power of culturally accepted “fact.” On this alone, Rachel Speght’s Protestant rereading of the Biblical evidence of women’s inferior ontological

status challenges the cultural constructions of “women” far more deeply than Jane Anger’s fable does (Shepherd 59; Lewalski 165). Speght’s rhetoric, like her argument, is delineated from Protestant beliefs, especially her ethos as a pious, young, virginal woman. As Lewalski depicts Speght:

[She]...offer[s] an especially effective rejoinder to Swetnam in the rhetorical category of ethical proof: the creation of a suitable persona. She presents herself as the living refutation of Swetnam’s charges against women: religious, learned, eminently rational, engagingly modest, unassuming, justifiably angry yet defending wronged women and their Creator. (Lewalski 162)

Speght attempts to enact the ontological status that she argues is appropriate for, and typical of, “good” women. Speght’s ethos is also derived in part from her use of her sources. Much of Speght’s response to Swetnam relies on Biblical material, Saint’s lives, and Christian doctrine for evidence from which to critique and reject Renaissance misogyny. The genres of religious devotions, confessions, and meditations were commonly accepted for women’s study and women’s writing (Henderson and McManus 62).

Nevertheless, the persona she creates was not necessarily the one her audience perceived in her. Cis von Heertum has found several annotations on a copy of Speght’s pamphlet from which he notes that her argument and her act of writing undermined her ethos appeal for at least one member of her readers. Looking at the copy at Yale University (Pressmark lh Sp 33617 M), Heertum discovered several hostile annotations, all in a handwriting contemporaneous with Speght’s publishing in 1617 (Heertum 492). The annotator is anonymous, but the writer quotes Latin which suggests a member of the more learned classes (Heertum 492). The annotations are particularly virulent in their attacks on Speght’s chastity and silence: for instance, the

annotator complains of her wanting a husband, of her “fighting for her Cunt-rie, for a puddinge as soone,” and of her speaking “like a mayd, not like a Virgin” (Heertum 493). The annotator particularly complains of her railing: “you had forgott [that] you are a preist daughter, for instead of preaching you rayle right downe,” and “she cannot choose but rayle doe what she can” (Heertum 493). These annotations question Speght’s propriety by asserting that she is not truly chaste or appropriately silent, which indicates that Speght’s attempt to recreate her ontological status and simultaneously enact the ethos of that new status failed completely to persuade this reader. Such reactions, as with this reader, likely prevented Speght’s audience from hearing her words, which silenced her before she speaks simply because she speaks.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, as Lewalski indicates, Speght does attempt to enact the ethos of a “good woman” while she attempts to redefine the ontological status of women. Speght attempts to enact several good scholarly practices, along with the various pious virtues, which suggests an ethos of a studious woman. For instance, she presents herself as reasonable by carefully organizing her text. The structure of Speght’s argument implicitly critiques the disjointed, if lively, structure of Swetnam’s *Arraignment* while it presents her argument as carefully reasoned. Her treatise is as tightly structured as the structure of the classical oration: its pattern of sign posting positions and then developing those positions recalls the relationship between the partition of an argument and the following confirmation. Yet Speght’s argument is not like the standard oration because

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<sup>3</sup> This serious response to Speght’s pamphlet also deeply undermines the central thesis of Linda Woodbridge’s *Women of the English Renaissance* in which she argues that the debate about women was not a real debate but a series of witty and humorous texts intended and received as simply entertainment. Not only does the sincere tone of several sections of these women’s pamphlets indicate a legitimate debate, this annotator’s sincere and anonymous response to both Speght and to her quotes of Swetnam indicates that neither text was perceived as part of a well-recognized series of humorous pamphlets.

she presents her refutation section prior to her confirmation. Speght refutes the theological evidence for women's inferior ontological status before presenting the Biblical evidence of women as potentially good. Though this structure is somewhat less conventional, as Gerda Lerner explains, such beginnings were common among early pro-women writings because the patriarchal arguments were deeply inculcated into the ideology of the readers (Lerner 138). Only after Speght eliminates the four significant misogynistic readings of the Bible does she then appropriate the Bible to redefine women's worth. Speght concludes the body of her pamphlet with a reading of the ethics of husband/wife power relations, in which applies the ontological status she has constructed for women to the circumstances of real, married woman. As an epilogue to her pamphlet she critiques several examples of Swetnam's failed grammar, style, argument and evidence, depicting him as a "blasphemer" who should "die the death" (Speght 78).

The central arguments of Speght's pamphlet deconstructs the ideology of women's inferiority, reconstructs women's ontological status through an applications of Aristotelian causality, and then applies the new construction to the ethical questions of behavior in marriage. Her evidence is mainly Biblical, reflecting her redefinition of an "orthodox" Protestant construction of the hierarchy of gender. Her defenses of women's worth are often equally attacks on men's superior ontological status. In her defense of women she considers four arguments: Eve's, and hence all women's, culpability for causing the Fall; Adam's culpability for the fall; Paul's injunction against sexual intercourse; and Solomon's complaint that he could find not one good woman among a thousand (Speght 65-66). Speght repeats the events of the Creation-fall story, but removes the "damaging significances" from those events (Lewalski 166).

For instance, Speght accepts the notion that Satan tempted Eve instead of Adam because she was the “weaker vessel” (Speght 66). But Speght empties the image of a weak vessel of its slight against women by comparing that vessel to “a crystal glass [which] sooner receives a crack than a strong stone pot” (Speght 66). Women’s weakness is accepted, but shifted into a sign of her greater purity and refinement. More importantly, she shifts the significance of the punishments Adam and Eve receive for their transgression, arguing that the more damning punishment is given to the man because his was the greater sin: “...the punishment of her transgression being particular to her own sex and to none but the female kind: but for the sin of man the whole earth was cursed” (Speght 66). The responsibility for the fall becomes the man’s, a position she reiterates a few lines later:

Then (and not afore) it is said that they saw it [their sin], as if sin were imperfect and unable to bring a deprivation of a blessing received, or death on all mankind, til man (in whom lay the active power of transgression) had transgressed. (Speght 67)

By redeeming Eve, Speght redeems the sex (Beilin xxi). Speght’s liberalizing reconstruction of the Renaissance gender hierarchy opens up a space for women to have distinctly feminine and respectable virtues.

Speght’s other three defenses of women in this treatise all shift the Bible’s statements about the nature of women into situated statements about women and men in historical time. This argument significantly challenges the relationship between the claims of an authority and the truth asserted by that authority:

As long as an authority was held to speak the absolute truth, to invoke him was sufficient to establish the truth of rightness of a given position or practice, and no feminist could conceive of forms of society that might

be alternatives to patriarchy...But when such authorities came to be regarded as historically contingent and relevant only to the particular situations they addressed (as they increasingly did during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries), then feminists could propose to legitimate nontraditional views of woman which vitiated patriarchal norms. (Jordan 34)

Speght, for instance, sees the common reading of St. Paul's injunction against sexual intercourse as misguided: Speght argues that Paul was only speaking to the Corinthians in their struggles (Speght 67-68). She incorporates other Biblical evidence to argue that sexual intercourse is not essentially evil, and so proves that the injunction was only temporary (Speght 68). Though this argument seems to critique only one reading of one passage of the Bible, the reading that is critiqued is extraordinarily influential. By making this reading, she implicitly undermines the authority of the Church Fathers who created the original reading, and she opens a space for her to make her own, pro-woman, reading of the Bible.

Only after Speght removes the presumption of women's evil nature does she define women's "excellences" (Speght 68), cataloging those excellences using Aristotle's notion of the four causes: efficient, material, formal, and final. Women's efficient cause is God; her material cause is the refined body of man-in-Paradise from whom she was made; her formal cause is like man's, whose face can look to heaven; and her final cause is to glorify God through all of her body, and to help men in their services to God (Speght 68-69). This argument moves the definition of women's virtue from service to men--from worshiping God in man--to virtue in herself, and it moves her spirituality from a mediated one through men to a direct relationship between herself and her God as she is to use her own voice, tongue, hands, and feet in God's service (Speght 69). Though the evidence for these causes is mainly Biblical, the structure of the



argument appeals to Aristotelian logic.<sup>4</sup> Though she may not have been perceived by the annotator of the Yale copy as rational or religious, the extent of her use of reasoning, clear structure, and Biblical evidence attempts to create for herself the ethos of a good, rational, spiritual woman, who “through the down-to-earth, knowledgeable voice of the bourgeois,...argues as teacher and preacher to strengthen women and correct men” (Beilin 258). This ethos enacts a refutation of the Biblical injunction against women preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 2: 11-12, and see MacLean 18). Because, as Beilin explains, Speght “aims to praise God through his work, woman; to encourage women to live up to their divinely ordained purpose; and to castigate those who have fallen away from the nature of true womanhood” (Beilin 258), the expectations of women and the ethos Speght attempts to create for herself as a woman enact and affirm each other.

Both Speght and Sowernam use Christianity to redefine women's nature and function, calling on Christians to see misogyny as blasphemy (Speght 78; Sowernam 91). They effectively split Christianity and Christian culture from the courtly and implicitly pagan culture. Sowernam uses this split to call on Christians to think critically about misogyny as an expression of irreverent, unchristian patriarchy. For instance, she says

...now let the Christian reader please to consider how dishonestly the author death, who, undertaking a particular, prosecuteth and persecuteth a general: under the cloak and colour of lewd, idle and froward women to rage and rail against women in general.  
(Sowernam 92)

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<sup>4</sup> This serious response to Speght's pamphlet also deeply undermines the central thesis of Linda Woodbridge's *Women of the English Renaissance* in which she argues that the debate about women was not a real debate but a series of witty and humorous texts intended and received as simply entertainment. Not only does the sincere tone of several sections of these women's pamphlets indicate a legitimate debate, this annotator's sincere and anonymous response to both Speght and to her quotes of Swetnam indicates that neither text was perceived as part of a well-recognized series of humorous pamphlets.

This Christian reader is presented as rational and calm in comparison to Swetnam, and Sowernam appeals to this reader, as a good Christian, to question calmly and rationally the common, negative expectations of women. She appeals to the beliefs of the audience, yet her questioning of patriarchy as a pagan phenomenon in a Christian culture appeals more to the bourgeois, religious audience, than to the humanist court. The argument is an implicit insult, for it assumes that the courtly culture was more a classically pagan one than a Christian one. Sowernam manipulates the expectations derived from the different discourse communities in which her work circulated, playing the middle-class values off of the court's humanism.

Nevertheless, three of these women pamphleteers challenge the conventional arguments concerning the "good" woman stereotype, and all of these women appropriate, in part, the stereotypes of women's vices, to undermine the limitations on their ethos that derived from the conventional virtues. Generally, women writers, when not condemned outright, were seen as either the ontological type of the "virile woman" or as the "shrew," depending primarily on whether the speaker about the woman writer was being generous. This ethical judgment of such writers is noted by Grafton and Jardine in their study of the Nogarola sisters:

'Virile' argumentative ability and 'Amazon-like' independence from men may make nice points in arguing for the appropriateness of female humanistic education. But they can all too readily be seen in a 'real-life' context as a socially indecorous absence of modesty and due deference, if not as a real social threat--the proverbial husband-beating shrew. (Grafton and Jardine 39)

The "shrew" and the "virile woman," though they denote distinct female types, actually delineate the same masculine behaviors in a particular woman.

Significantly, the terms not only connote different moral assessments of women who develop the “masculine” skills of reasoning and speaking, they indicate such women’s sexual status as well. As Henderson and McManus, and others, point out, the “shrew” or the “scold” is commonly “a married woman who controls, nags, and expresses contempt for her husband” (51).<sup>5</sup> The “virile” woman, when the term was used as praise, usually indicated a virgin, as Grafton and Jardine noted about the Nogarola sisters. For instance, when Ginevre Nogarola married, she demurely disappeared from Italy’s intellectual circles (36). Of all the ontological types, the “virile woman’s” speech was ideologically constructed as potentially reasonable, and so potentially persuasive. Yet appropriating the virile woman “type” as a speaking position was only a *possible* solution to the audience’s expectations of the unacceptability of the woman speaker, for such a woman speaker could easily be seen as an unreasonable and dangerous shrew. Because women’s best rhetorical ornament was defined as their silence, the audience’s expectations were challenged by these women’s very act of writing. These women’s public pamphlets, which used invective rhetoric to defend women and refute men, indicate that these women may have failed in their analysis of their rhetorical situation. Their risky use of invective in their pamphlets critiqued particular writers as representatives of the tradition of misogyny and the audience for accepting that misogyny. This mockery could easily support patriarchy because

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<sup>5</sup> I am here forced to comment on Shakespeare’s Kate in *Taming of the Shrew*. If what I have learned is true, I see a possible rereading of Kate, and of Petruchio. For Kate is not married, and is more the virginal virago than a true “shrew” or “scold”. The sexual predator in the play who begins the play complaining about money, and who constantly nags and abuses his partner, is Petruchio. I wonder if the ready identification of Kate as the shrew is accurate, because the many ways Petruchio exhibits shrew-like behavior, and because he has to be “tamed” into the more accepted “masculine” role of patriarch. Though that reading is admittedly far-fetched, I will say that the play seems to question the nature of the “shrew” enough to be more a satire on the shrew than a straight-forward depiction of it.

it may seem to justify men's rejection of women's anger and women's concerns (Henderson and McManus 52). All of these pamphleteers speak in anger at the risk of being typed as a "shrew" or "scold." As a type, the shrew was mocked by anti-women pamphleteers; such mockery undermined the authority of assertive women. For instance, by using anger and by appropriating the behaviors and words of the scold type, Anger

discover[s] positive meanings in conventional negative phrases, rather than by inventing her own terms of praise (or taking over humanist ones)...Through her redefinition of such phrases, Anger takes away from antifeminist men the power to define what woman is, but she rejects only the negative vision of woman offered by tradition, not the positive ideal. (Benson 227)

Anger condemns men as the source of various evils in women's lives and she praises women as superior to men--for Anger, hostility between the sexes is far better than the continuing abuse women receive from men (Anger 42). Yet there is no historical evidences that these challenges to the audiences's expectations persuaded the audience to see women differently. The "feminism" failed and the pamphlets fell into obscurity. None of these women's pamphlets were reprinted within the first hundred and fifty years after their original printing, yet Swetnam's misogynistic pamphlet went through several editions over the next hundred years.

One explanation for these women's risky use of invective rhetoric, as Linda Woodbridge posits, derives not from the pamphlets's relationship to serious rhetorical genres, but to the literary genre of the debate about women in England. This debate genre is highly playful: its attacks against women often are little more than a collection of sexist or misogynistic jokes. To a degree, these women writers were responding to the invective of the debate genre with

a collection of misandrous jokes. Nevertheless, within their extraordinary marginalizations (as rejecting the community's beliefs, as presenting women writing, as mocking, instead of merely emulating, the accepted genres) these women's invective rhetoric occasionally allowed for persuasive or subversive speech. For instance, Anger says that she "would call in question that which now hath ever been questionless" concerning the relative worth of men and women (Anger 32). Effectively, she is arguing for a deep questioning of patriarchy.

By splicing poetry into their work these women indicate that they speak not just to the readers and writers of prose, but to the readers and writers of poetry as well. Poetry was, of course, a highly respected form of literary expression, if only because poetry was more used and read by members of the court while prose was the form for the fringe, hack pamphleteers and for the more middle class readership. As such, the critique of poetry and the use of poetry for invective are underhand critiques of the powerful users of poetry--the court. Much of this poetry directly attacks the male literary hacks and their misogynistic sources. Sovernam, in the most playful of these poems, with its rollicking, mocking rhythm, critiques Swetnam:

An idle companion was raging of late,  
 Who in fury 'gainst women expresseth his hate...  
 Any answer may serve an impudent liar  
 Any mangy scabbed horse doth fit a scaled squire  
 (Sovernam 115)

But not all of the poetry's playfulness is so evident from its rhythm. Jane Anger often directs her invective against men's speech--one line of one of her poems claims that "Vile are men's lusts, false are their lying lips besmeared with flattery" (Anger 42). Munda's occasional invective is, at least, as harsh as the

quote above, and much more typical of the kinds of invective in these pamphlets. Munda attacks Swetnam, his audience, and his sources:

...Could the strain  
Of that your barren, idle, dunghill brain,  
As from a chemic limbeck, so distil  
Your poisoned drops of hemlock: and so fill  
The itching ears of silly swains and rude  
Truth-not discerning rustic multitude  
With sottish lies, with bald and ribald lies  
Patched out of English writers....  
(Munda 128)

As hyperbole, this poem mocks the tradition of hyperbolic comments on women, including the, then standard, etymological joke of "women" as derived from "woe to man." These negative hyperboles confront the convention of the hyperbolic praise of women in courtly poetry by using the figure to critique men. Munda also uses the poetic convention of curses in her closing poem. After long series of small curses she condemns Swetnam's hack-writing:

...May thy rude quill  
Be always mercenary, and write still  
That which no man will read, unless to see  
Thine ignorance, and then laugh at thee. (Munda 162)

These pamphleteers's mocking poetry simultaneously writes against some poetic conventions and through poetry and its literary conventions. Such writing destabilizes artistic speech as potentially seen as superior to prose. This destabilizing of the culture's reification of poetry allows these women to deeply critique the literary misogyny in men's writings.

These writers's invective extends to men's ethos and the effects of men's misogyny on their rhetoric. Munda depicts men's writing about women as a

dynamic relationship among the appropriated sources, the writer's incompetence, and the readers's acceptance of sin:

[W]oman...is generally become the subject of every pendantical goose-quill. Every fantastic poetaster, which thinks he hath licked the vomit of his Coryphaeus and can but patch a hobbling verse together, will strive to represent unseemly figments imputed to our sex (a pleasing theme to the vulgar) on the public theater: teaching the worser sort, that are more prone to luxury, a compendious way to learn to be sinful. (Munda 160)

For Munda, men write, men read men's writings, and men copy men's writing about women, which makes women objects for "public" display and which trains more men to the sinful use (or abuse) of women. The "vomit" image here indicates this relationship: for to vomit one must first ingest, possibly even whole, something rotted or diseased. When contemporary writers take in the "rot" of earlier writers misogyny they just spew it forth again. This vomiting image is also used by Sovernam, who says that "...our adversary [Joseph Swetnam] hath vomited out against women, and not what he hath objected but what other authors of more import than Joseph Swetnam have charged against women..." (Sovernam 106). Munda's and Sovernam's use of the vomiting metaphor effectively captures the mental state of the writer who unthinkingly borrows from the misogynistic literary tradition, for it shows that thinking clearly and critically is not remotely possible after ingesting the rot of misogyny. As Munda and Sovernam present these sources and the writers who cite them, these men's reasoning seem diseased and unreliable, which undermines an audience's expectations of men's writings as inherently superior to women's texts.

These women also mock these misogynistic writer's thoughtlessness in their use of their contemporary sources and in their excessive use of tropes and

figures. Munda has several passages complaining of plagiarism, mainly arguing that the heavy borrowings do little more than further obscure the writers's arguments. For instance, Munda complains that Swetnam's "indiscretion is as great in the laying together and compiling of your stolen ware as [is] your blockishness in stealing, for your sentences hang together like sand without lime" (Munda 142). For Munda, Swetnam's splicings of stolen material into his tract results in confusion. Anger noted similar confusion caused by men's overuse of "rhetoric"--meaning tropes and figures. Men, Anger argues, "run so into rhetoric as oftentimes they overrun the bounds of their own wits, and go they know not whither. If they have stretched their invention so hard..there remains but one help, which is, to write of us women" (Anger 32). So, not only is men's anti-women reasoning diseased, their misogynistic writings are a jumble.

Women are perceived as a relatively easy topic by men with confused and diseased imaginations. Such writings against women, for Anger, do not convince Anger that women are inherently evil, but instead they convince her to expect men's writings to be consistently false:

Fie on the falsehood of men, whose minds go oft a madding and whose tongues cannot so soon be wagging, but straight they fall a-tattling! Was there ever so abused, so slandered, so railed upon, or so wickedly handled as are we women? (Anger 32)

Because these writings are "false," men's ethos, as writers's, is seen as being comprised of three "qualities": "lust, deceit, and malice." (Anger 32). This redefinition of men's ethos, as lustful and malicious, in Anger's pamphlet echoes the standard expectations of women's ethos, but redirects those expectations on to men's writings. Anger argues that all women should seem to



trust men, but should actually believe nothing they say.

[T]herefore think well of as many as you may, love them that you have cause, hear everything that they say (and afford them nods which make themselves noddies) but believe very little thereof or nothing at all, and hate all those who shall speak anything in the dispraise of our sex.  
(Anger 43)

The similar depictions of many men's ethos in parts of Sowernam, Munda and Anger--that misogynists's reasons are sick, their writings are a mess, and their sources inaccurate--function to undermine men's *ethos* as accepted authorities by creating a new and different set of expectations of men as authors.

Within such questionings of men's authority, not surprisingly, there are a few indirect comments on patriarchy. For instance, Sowernam appropriates a theological argument for women's inferior status as evidence for questioning men's ontological status. Sowernam turns the argument that women are inherently "crooked" into an attack on men:

[If I] admit that this author's [Joseph Swetnam's] doctrine be true, that woman receiveth her froward and crooked disposition from the rib, woman may then conclude upon that axiom of philosophy...that which giveth a quality to a thing, doth more abound in that quality[:]....so, if a woman receiveth her crookedness from the rib, and consequently from the man, how doth men excel in crookedness, who hath more of those crooked ribs? See how this vain, furious, idle author furnisheth woman with an argument against himself and others of his sex? (Sowernam 92)

Sowernam mocks men who make this misogynistic argument. Similarly, Anger implicitly critiques the numerous conduct books which define women's appropriate gender roles by using the rhetoric of such texts as a brief "conduct" manual for men:

Every honest man ought to shun that which...detracteth both health and safety from his own person, and strive to bridle his slanderous

tongue. Then must he be modest and show his modesty by his virtuous and civil behaviors; and not display his beastliness through his wicked and filthy words. For lying lips and deceitful tongues are abominable before God.... (Anger 38)

Using the limitations this culture placed on women, Anger indicates the hypocrisy of those constrictions. These rare statements in Anger's and Sovernam's pamphlets place men in the speaking position socially mandated as women's place. Within such a speaking position, men are as silenced as women, which indicates that the constraints are not truly inherent to women's essence but are a social construct. By getting angry, these women show that the "shrew" position benefits the speaker because the shrew's words are less constrained than the good woman's words. The influence of women's ontological status in the culture, as it shapes those stereotypes and the audience's expectations based on those stereotypes, essentializes women as Woman and constructs women as one dimensional, as either a good or bad. In the next chapter I will discuss how these women use the reputation of the pamphlet form, in conjunction with the stereotypes of the shrew and virile woman, to construct for themselves personal reputations that are more complex than a mere stereotype, and hence to construct for themselves an ethos appeal that is not limited to just the audience's culturally constructed expectations of them.

## CHAPTER VI

### ETHOS AND REPUTATION IN EARLY MODERN WOMEN'S PAMPHLETS

When Ester Sowernam speaks of Rachel Speght and her work, she describes Speght as “a Minister’s daughter,” “as a maiden,” and as “tender...of years” (Sowernam 87). Sowernam says that she only “ran over” her predecessor’s pamphlet (87), but her assessment of Speght’s overall ethos is generally accurate. Speght’s persona, as the demure, virginal, and fundamentally obedient young woman, allows her to seem to speak as the ontological type of the “good” woman. Nevertheless, when a woman published her work, she was usually seen as “symbolically violat[ing] feminine modesty by exposing private thoughts to the world” (Goreau 15) and was regarded as verbally “loose,” an attribute which “paralleled big spending” (Jones 55). The particular reputation that the woman writer or speaker fashions for herself plays a significant role in establishing her ethos as acceptable to a particular audience and to the community generally. Only Rachel Speght, of all the women pamphleteers under consideration here, could have been personally known to members of her primary audience, the middle-class readers of London. The other three writers were almost certainly personally unknown to their audience--two of the writers used pseudonyms to obscure their identities and the third writer, Jane Anger, was either one of several women who had that name or was another pseudonymous writer. In this chapter, I will look the dynamics of these women’s fashioning of their personal reputations; yet first I will discuss the particular reputation connoted by the virile woman stereotype that these pamphleteers attempt to appropriate.

Neither the virile woman or the shrew were fundamentally “civic” speaking positions, nor did the position compel a public or a male audience to listen, though such speakers were seen as potentially very engaging. As Grafton and Jardine explain about the Nogarola sisters, the prospect of these women using their learning to engage in civic discourse was couched by their humanist colleagues as legendary.

Here the virtue of the Nogarola sisters is characterized in two ways, neither of them ‘civic’: first, the sisters are indubitable virgins (Genevra in fact fades from the scene when she marries); secondly, they are represented as sisters in spirit to various magnificent women of classical antiquity. Humanists--male humanists--praising the Nogarola sisters liken them routinely to Sappho, Cornelia, Aspasia, Portia....The strategy of all such compliments is the same: they shift the focus of praise away from the engaged and civic (women speaking publicly), making figurative purity and iconic Amazon valour the object of attention. (Grafton and Jardine 36)

By turning the Nogarola sisters into living legends, the humanists silenced these women--generally legends do not engage in current intellectual debate or speak in the contemporary public forum. Where such historical references to great women could undermine misogynistic stereotypes, as I discussed in chapter five, such references when applied to “real” women allowed men to dismiss them with a feather-light touch.

More significantly, the “virile woman” problematized the Renaissance bifurcation of gender roles. By affirming women’s appropriation of masculine behaviors in the abstract, patriarchal writers celebrated masculine gender roles. But when living women practiced those behaviors, they undermined patriarchal power structures because the practice indicated that sex need not constrain a person to various roles, including those masculine leadership roles which justified the patriarchal culture. The virile woman excelled in “rationality,

courage, and physical strength" (Jordan 137), and troubled the "masculine" nature of these gender roles by proving that these characteristics are not inherently connected to biological sex. The Renaissance humanist men were aware of the gender trouble caused when a woman excelled in the male province of humanist education. For instance, Quirini, when asked his opinion of the practical and moral value of educating women, responded in praise of humanist education generally, but questioned whether such education in a woman would be becoming, or even moral (Grafton and Jardine 33). By equivocating, Quirini continued the promotion of a humanist, rhetorical, and civic education as a means to develop a student's virtues, while still prohibiting such education for women.

As important in Renaissance culture as morality is, for women gender decorum--being "becoming" or having an excellent reputation--significantly shaped much of their social and economic lives. In the polis, human action is "limited by certain accepted notions of decorum which define what constitutes proper speech [and behavior]" (Hampton 19). Within the context of Renaissance gender decorum a woman was expected both to actually fashion herself as some version of the "good woman type" and to consistently and continuously "seem" to be "good" as well.

The woman existed supposedly to marry, to give birth, and to keep quiet. Her marriage prospects were assessed on the basis of her reputation (not all fathers could afford to tempt suitors with huge dowries). A woman would not get far in the marriage market if she was *said to be* a witch or a whore. Notice that it is the woman who is spoken about; she herself was not meant to be a speaker. The woman who did speak out, who cursed or yelled or argued with men, was said to be a scold or a shrew and regarded as little better than a whore. So a woman's 'value', which in fact meant her social place and, eventually, her sense of herself, derived from what the 'world' said about her. Her reputation depended rather more upon other people's verbal assessments of her than her own

capabilities. (Shepherd 11-12)

To be seen as a "shrew," or worse, could lead to ostracism, "justified" abuse to "tame" such a woman, or the grueling poverty generally experienced by unmarried women.

Women were not only written upon by the oral text of the community's gossip about them, as Shepherd argues, their reputations could easily effect their self-esteem. Unlike the notion of "self-fashioning" that Greenblatt argues is common among the Renaissance men--where men shaped their public selves to accommodate the expectations of their community--Renaissance women's "self-fashioning" was neither unidirectional nor delineated by a public/private split. A woman's reputation could shape her as much, or even more than, she shaped it. Many of the conduct books, printed lectures, homilies, and, especially, satires which were aimed at women readers and which discussed those women who transgressed gender decorum, presented women as little more than what they *seemed* to be, and subtly encouraged women to equate their self-esteem with their reputations (see Jones 40).

The power of reputation is not lost on the women pamphleteers, or on their twentieth century critics. For instance, Benson discusses Jane Anger's act of writing in the context of the reputation writing could give to Anger. Benson posits that Anger constructs a "good reputation" for herself by justifying her writing as the expression of anger and by apologizing for the resulting vehemence in her words. As Anger says, and Benson quotes:

Shall surfeiters rail on our kindness, you stand still and say naught: and shall not anger stretch the veins of her brains, the strings of her fingers, and the lists of her modesty to answer their surfeitings? Yes truly. And herein I conjure all you to aid and assist me in defense of my willingness, which shall make me rest at your commands.

(Anger 32; also Benson 226)

Anger's depiction of her writing, as pushing the limits of her "modesty," and her justification of her writing, as caused by anger, opens a space for her to use vehement speech while allowing her to claim that she is a "good" woman. As Benson describes this implicit argument:

Self-defense...is an implicit component of all defenses, but while male authors defend their right to speak on such a subject, Anger defends her right to speak at all. Her defense is not her wisdom or even her experience, but her anger, which drives her to this act, which is at the limits of modesty. (Benson 227)

Anger implicitly claims that she is not a shrew through her admission of the power of her modesty, which here stands for the whole system of female gender decorum, to bind her actions. Benson sees this implied argument as anger redeeming Anger "morally because it portrays her writing as unpremeditated and her bashfulness as overcome by passion but still active in her--she must apologize and ask understanding for what she has done" (226). Anger's justification for her writing is not only a moral one, it is also rhetorical. She is attempting to create for herself the reputation of the rational, strong, courageous, virile woman.

Nevertheless, Anger's ethos could be read as shrewish if we assume the author is not sincere in her words. As several modern critics have noted, the shrew's reputation could have a number of uses. For instance, the shrew could be seen as a vehicle for social and political criticism (Purkiss 84) and as a literary device for depicting a sexual predator (Grafton and Jardine 41). But commonly, shrews were worthy only of mockery which

sought to maintain patriarchy by demonstrating to women that loud and

aggressive behavior was unacceptable and by communicating to men that they need not take the demands of such women seriously. (Henderson and McManus 52)

Where the virile woman could be dismissed with a feather-light touch, the shrew was often silenced with a sledgehammer.

The culturally mandated condemnation of women thinkers resulted in the deep seated taboo against women as writers. Even within the limited arena of religious testifying, as Jones notes from a study of early seventeenth century conduct books, a backlash against women writers was developing (40). In probably more direct response to the "shrew" type, the contemporary marriage manuals "monitor[ed] women's speech indoors and out, on the assumption that natural female garrulity must be carefully controlled in the interests of the domestic unit" (Jones 59). Generally, then, there were two obstacles to a woman becoming a writer: 1) education 2) societal norms:

The sense of intellectual inferiority or illegitimacy that a superficial education could create constituted the most obvious impediment to literary ambition for a woman of the seventeenth century. There was, however, a much more subtle and complex inhibition that women repeatedly mentioned as a reason they hesitated to publish their work: feminine modesty. (Goreau 9)

The taboo against women writers, in conjunction with the humility women were "naturally" expected to emulate and their lack of sufficient education, could easily have silenced many women. The taboo itself was not without bite for, as Goreau notes, critics of women's works were likely to mock, jeer, flout and verbally lacerate these women (Goreau 17-18). Goreau sees women writers's repeated denials of responsibility for their works, like Jane Anger's claim that "anger" is responsible for her words, as a response to such attacks (Goreau 17-



18).

Yet, as I discussed in my introduction, the humility topos--the feminine apologia for writing--is more than a response to the harsh attacks women receive when they break the decorum of feminine silence, it is also an attempt to construct one's personal reputation as humble or modest despite the breach of the gender role. Munda, for instance, attempts to both protect herself from attack and to construct her personal reputation in her use of the humility topos:

Though feminine modesty hath confined our rarest and ripest wits, we acknowledge it our greatest ornament....Being too much provoketh by arraignments, baitings and rancorous impeachments of the reputation of our whole sex [I believe the]....opportunity of speaking [when] slipped by silence is as bad as importunity upheld by babbling,....Know therefore that we [women] will cancel your [Swetnam's] accusations, traverse your bills, and come upon you for false indictment--and think not 'tis our waspishness that shall sting you. (Munda 132)

Like Anger, Munda justifies her vehemence as the expression of valid, ethical fury against the railer Swetnam. Yet, here, the concurrence of the humility topos--the celebration of it in the "rarest and ripest wits" of womankind--with the attack on slander indicates the connection between these rhetorical moves: both are *active* bids to control the talk that shaped these women's lives.

If the humility topos is actually an assertive creation of one's own reputation, then the common assumption that these authors used pseudonyms out of humility also needs to be reconsidered. Both Henderson and McManus, and Beilin, have concluded that these pamphleteers used pseudonyms to protect their reputations against public censure and to express sincere modesty. Beilin specifically assumes that the pseudonyms are an expression of the women's "anxiety" over the possibility that they may be humiliated (248). Henderson and McManus show fully the logic embedded in this argument:

The fact that the women...used pseudonyms although most of the men in the controversy published either anonymously or under their own names also indicates the daring required at this time for a woman to published anything but works of a strictly devotional nature....When even ordinary women of the time saw the publication of a book by a woman as a symptom of mental instability, it is no wonder that women used pseudonyms. (Henderson and McManus 23)

Certainly, concluding that the writers used pseudonyms as a reaction to excessively cruel critiques and as a protection of their "modest" reputations is reasonable; I do not contest this conclusion, but I find that it is only partial. It fails to recognize that these women writers have, simply in the act of writing, challenged the accepted notions of women and have acted, instead of reacted, to the railers against them. Simply the fact that they wrote is evidence that the use of both the humility topos and the pseudonyms needs to be read as an intentional, and rhetorical, action instead of as a reaction.

Margaret Ezell notes that readings of sixteenth and seventeenth century women's pseudonyms, like Henderson and McManus's and Beilin's, are "based on a sense of the ways in which nineteenth century women used the convention" (Ezell 35) and that such readings of "earlier women writers cast a pitying glance on the practice of using pseudonyms" (Ezell 35). Ezell reminds the reader of the need to understand these women within the context of their own historical time instead of reading them from the norms of nineteenth and twentieth century culture. Unlike more recent women writers, who used pseudonyms to hide their sex in reaction to cultural pressures, Ezell argues that Renaissance women writers did not so disguise themselves:

Pseudonyms and anonymous publication are seen [by modern critics reading ahistorically] as protective strategies because they effectively hide the author's sex and enable her to simultaneously preserve her "modesty" while receiving a fair hearing. However, in the sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries, unlike in the nineteenth century, we do not find women using pseudonyms to hide their sex. The pseudonyms chosen--Orinda, Astrea, Ardelia, Ephelia, Corinna--clearly signal the writer's sex. Nor was the use of this type of pseudonym a marginal literary practice--we have Poliarchus (Sir Charles Cottrell), Philaretus (Robert Boyle), Thyrsis (Rochester), and Damon (a favorite of several men, including the sober John Locke). The use of a pseudonym did serve to create a literary persona, but in the Renaissance and seventeenth century, one finds these names are gender specific. (Ezell 36)

In the pamphlets, the use of pseudonyms are also gender specific (Thomas Teltroth, Joan Hit-him-home) and widely used, often to create a persona (Adam Foule-weather) or to indicate subject matter (Simon Smel-knave) (Clark 29). The pseudonyms may have provided some protection, but they primarily delineated the writer's reputation.

Though I see pseudonyms as I see the humility topos--as intentional rhetorical devices for creating the personal reputation appropriate to a successful ethos--Purkiss, using observations similar to my own, argues that these pseudonyms indicate that the implied authors of these texts are ironic constructs instead of sincere female voices. Though I must apologize for what will be an extremely long quote, I wish to present Purkiss's argument fully because it challenges two of my more significant premises--that the actual authors of these texts are fundamentally sincere, though often joking on the surface, and that the gendered signatures indicate the gender of the implied author. Purkiss would not agree with me, and would argue that my position is an ahistorical reading:

I would like to consider the function of female pseudonyms in the context of a popular culture which sometimes placed gender indeterminacy in its festive repertoire, and to suggest that the pamphlets provide several clues to the kind of female voice figured in them. Read beside names like "Mary Stiff" and "Virgin Want," names like "Jane Anger" and "Ester Sowernam" seem to point less towards a substantive female author too

modest to put her name in print than to the texts themselves, placing them not as the product of particular people but as operative parts of a particular strand of symbolism which had become a textual game. Often read by feminist critics as tropes of modesty, the specificity of these pseudonyms rather foregrounds female unruliness. The pseudonyms create a speaking position for the respondents not outside but at the centre of the woman debate's citations, from allegories ('Constantia' and 'Prudentia') to Biblical heroines ('Ester') and scold and unruly women of the lower orders ('Jane Anger', 'Joan Sharp', 'Mary Tattle-well'). These names are themselves part of a rhetoric of citation, indicating not individuality but the circulation of names in culture, not proper names but improper stories. Products of the woman-debate genre, the names also attach the speaking voices of the pamphlets firmly to particular debating roles, often the role of the respondent. "Sowernam," for example, is simply the opposite of Swe(e)tnam, sour (like scolds and shrews) where he is sweet....[T]he names under which the pamphlets appear mean that though they purport to be by women, the reader is invited to see this as a penetrable screen identity, a theatrical performance of femininity which indicates a joke at women's expense. The names do not clearly illustrate female agency; rather, they illustrate the taking-up of the position of a disorderly woman for the purpose of signifying disorder of some kind, domestic or political. (Purkiss 84)

I agree with several of Purkiss's observations: the pseudonyms represent more than an expression of modesty; the shrew type is invoked, though possibly unwillingly, by these pamphleteers; the names chosen by these writers function as a rhetoric of citation to other writers in the genre or to other stories; the use of pseudonyms are theatrical to an extent; and certainly these texts are responding to earlier attacks. Nevertheless, I do not agree with several of her other conclusions, or with the duality which she sees as separating the "serious" defenses of women from the joking around that occurred in much of the woman debate, or with her final silencing of the "women," as marked by these signatures, as little more than allegories for domestic or political disorder.

Though I do not deny that the woman-debate genre included a good bit of joking around and theatricality, and that some of the pseudonyms proclaim

unruly behavior, I question whether Purkiss's position successfully accounts for the pseudonymous writers under consideration in this dissertation: neither the names Constantia Munda (Moral Constancy) or Ester Sowernam indicate the kind of satire, as, say, "Mary Tattle-well" does. I agree that "Jane Anger" might indicate merely female unruliness and satire: except that her name may be as real as Rachel Speght's.<sup>1</sup> Simon Shepherd found three currently living Jane Angers, and another three Joan Angers whose Christian name was often signed as Jane, residing in and around London (Shepherd 30). Shepherd also argues that "Jane" is not "one of the Christian names commonly associated with aggressive female types (compare Moll, Meg, Kate, Frank)" (Shepherd 30). I agree with Purkiss that the use of pseudonyms plays along with the satiric conventions in the genre, but I do not read these pseudonyms, if pseudonyms all these names be, as completely eliding a sincere or serious female implied author. Also, though I agree that the pseudonyms represent "penetrable screen identities," and even invite considerations of the ethos of the implied authors, I seriously doubt that they indicate solely allusions to domestic and political unruliness, and are not references to female identity and status.

More significantly, I believe that Purkiss allows herself to assume a false dichotomy by reading the implied authors of these pamphlets as *either* sincere women writers or playful constructs for domestic and political satire. Purkiss, like Woodbridge before her, cannot account for such writers as Speght, who seriously participated in a genre which they see as widely understood as merely a sophisticated game. Instead, Purkiss and Woodbridge either ignore

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<sup>1</sup> Linda Woodbridge, in a seminal book on the Renaissance woman debate, argued that much of the debate was an elaborate game, mainly comprised of sophisticated and not so sophisticated jokes. Unfortunately, Woodbridge failed to recognize the possibility that underneath the joking around there could be a serious debate about women. Since her work it has been impossible to read the pamphlets without an awareness of the humor involved.

evidence that the Swetnam debate was read as seriously arguing about women's status--as Speght's work indicates--or argue that readers such as Speght just did not get the joke. Unlike Purkiss and Woodbridge, I believe that an overlapping of sorts exists between the ethos of the serious author and that of the rhetorical, playful voice. As Beilin posits, the evidence from both the serious and playful speech in these works indicates an awareness of the conventions of the genre and a serious attempt to critique the anti-women assumptions embedded in many of those conventions:

[M]ore likely, "Jane Anger" was a useful and appropriate persona to begin the task [of rebutting attacks on women], just as "Constantia Munda" was an appropriate pseudonym for the defender of women's fortitude under oppression. Once more, it is important to understand the choice of genre....[T]he formal controversy over women had developed as an elaborate rhetorical game, a series of conventional arguments for or against women....Rachel Speght, Ester Sowernam, [and] Constantia Munda...took up the old genre specifically to undermine the game and to discredit the perpetrators. (Beilin 249)

Beilin, unlike Woodbridge and Purkiss, recognizes that these writers could participate in the jokes of the genre but to serious and sincere intent. As their awareness of the game indicates, these women polemicists construct a reputation for themselves not only from the ontological type of the virile woman that they attempt to emulate, but from the conventions in and reputation of the discourse they choose to appropriate. Unlike Henderson and McManus and others who read the Renaissance woman debate primarily through its topical appeals, critics like Shepherd and Beilin recognize the rhetoric involved in these pamphlets's form.

Woodbridge, for instance, basis her argument about the pamphlets on changing the reputation conferred on the authors by the pamphlet form.

Woodbridge reads the entire genre as involved in a literary game, and as a series of sophisticated jokes, so any evidence indicating that these writers were sincere undermines her perspective. Not surprisingly, Woodbridge insists on redefining these “pamphlets” as not truly “pamphlets” at all:

It is customary to refer to a number of documents in these...controversies as pamphlets and to the Swetnam controversy in particular as a “pamphlet war.” *Pamphlet*, however, is an insidious term: it denotes merely a literary work bound in a particular way, but since it connotes hasty composition, ephemerality, a popular and indiscriminating readership, and hack work, it is prejudicial to the serious consideration of these works. (Renaissance authors more often call their opponents’s work pamphlets than their own.) The term is misleading, too, in its conjured image of inflammatory rhetoric (usually in prose) and fervor--approaching zealotry--for a cause; I want to argue for considerable aesthetic detachment and a sense of play in the formal controversy, which especially in Tudor times was often conducted in poetry; its authors should not be envisioned as pamphleteers. (Woodbridge 7)

Though both Woodbridge and I agree on the appropriate application of the denotation of “pamphlet” to indicate the physical form of these works, I also find that the connotation of “pamphlet” is applicable to these polemics. Woodbridge rejects any reading that these works are “hasty in composition,” “ephemeral,” “popular,” and “hack work;” simultaneously, she denies the potential for sincerity in these works by rejecting the “inflammatory” nature of their rhetoric or the “fervor” of their appeals, favoring instead a reading of the “aesthetic detachment” she sees as infusing them. Yet her argument for aesthetic detachment and considered composition is not readily supported by the texts: Sowerham never fully completes the argument she sets out, Munda complains of having to work hastily, and Speght asks forgiveness for not answering Swetnam’s charges against widows. The texts are often little more than hack work: Munda’s first few sentences are barely understandable and Anger’s

allegory is barely decipherable. Not only are the texts plagued with evidence of hasty composition, they were truly occasional, ephemeral pieces: unlike Swetnam's often reprinted diatribe, the defenders's texts were each printed once in the century. Woodbridge's final claim is that the rhetoric of the works is more aesthetic than inflammatory, yet I have already freely quoted these writers's use of inflammatory rhetoric and vehement arguments, and I will be including several more such quotes.

More fundamental to Woodbridge's reading of the texts is her notion of the primary audience for these texts. She insists on seeing the topic of the debate about women as uniting the middle class pamphlets with the similar debate then occurring in Renaissance literary circles: she see the "debate about women" as a formal quality instead of as a topical one. By confusing a topic with a form, she bridges the class and context gaps separating the mainly middle class pamphlets from courtier poetry, and so insists that the pamphlets were written with the same "aesthetic detachment" she sees as informing the courtly work. Yet the court's primary mode of exchanging written material was in sharing manuscripts, with only occasional collection of works being printed in the author's lifetime. The pamphlets, however, were printed material, primarily in prose instead of the more courtly poetry, prepared for sale at the booksellers and, so, were marked for mass consumption by middle class readers. Woodbridge does not recognize the primary audience the pamphlets appeal to through their medium and their mode of distribution; she instead argues that "we are not in the presence of Renaissance Attitudes Toward Women[;] we are in the presence of art" (Woodbridge 45). Despite Woodbridge's attempt to redeem the pamphlet war by calling it a "formal controversy" and by claiming that the participants were artists, she fails to delineate the formal appeals



accurately and confuses topical appeals with formal ones.

I suspect both an interest in delineating the characteristics of these pamphleteers's reputations and the malleability between topical and generic conventions lead some modern feminists to examine "defense of women" as the topic appears in several Renaissance genres. Wellington, for instance, looks at pro- and anti-feminist thought in Renaissance poetry, especially in the Petrarchan traditions (Wellington 2ff). Jordan recognizes that her categorization of the Renaissance topic "defense of women" does not prove the existence of a unified genre, but is instead a creation of the selection process she imposes on her primary sources:

Many are straightforward "defenses of women;" some are didactic works, devoted to celebrating and at the same time circumscribing the nature of "women;" and, more problematic, a few are overtly misogynistic diatribes that by portraying the sturdy reliance of their objects of scorn often transform blame into a kind of grudging or implied praise. In toto, they cover (that is, I have chosen to see feminist argument in) a range of genres: histories, conduct books, treatises on governments, letters, popular and courtly dialogues, and prose romances. (Jordan 12)

Jordan's sensitivity to the arbitrary nature of her choices for sorting her primary sources, though admirable, indicates a significant difference between the nature of a genre and the nature of a topic. Where a topic is amorphous in the form it can be expressed in, a genre is often defined primarily through its formal conventions. The less a particular work includes the formal conventions of a particular genre, the less likely that the work will be categorized as belonging to that genre. The result of this definition of a genre is that shared topical appeals do not necessarily result in similar generic designations, nor can such shared topical appeals alone be considered as solid evidence for a designating a work as belonging to a particular genre.

Yet several significant feminist scholars of the Renaissance, like Woodbridge, Benson, and Ferguson, have confused the topical similarities of the “defense of women” with the generic nature of these works, which results in misreadings about the reputation the pamphlet form may confer on the writer. For instance, Benson notes that humanist thought occurs in some of the continental marriage manuals and in many of the defenses of Elizabeth’s rule. Yet Benson repeatedly expresses surprise when she fails to find humanist thought in the popular defenses of women. She assesses the genre of the popular, polemical defense of women against the standards of humanist thought, which she believes was the Renaissance cornerstone for liberating ideas about women. Not surprisingly, the polemics strike her as reactionary:

[Humanist thought] is almost entirely absent from the debate about women as it appears in original works by English writers for the popular press....[T]hese native English works do not challenge the traditional valuation of women on the basis of their sexual purity; nor do they employ the rhetorical methods of paradox; nor do they engage in a serious analysis of women’s social role....Both the satire and the sentimentality suggest that the desire to reform morals back to standards that have been abandoned is the occasion for these works, rather than the humanist desire to rethink social structures and their components. Under cover of titles that suggest the new, they defend the old. They represent a resistance movement.... (Benson 205)

The “new” for Benson is humanism, and humanist thought becomes for Benson a genre marker for pro-woman writings. Yet the pamphlet form generally followed the interests of its primary audience, the middle-class. Humanist thought was primarily a courtly and continental phenomenon, and those works which included humanist thought marked themselves as appealing to the courtier readership more than to the middle-class. Though humanist thinkers and middle-class writers may share similar interests, that similarity is not formal,

but topical, and so is not evidence for a genre which spans the conventional courtly writings and bourgeoisie ones.

Ferguson, like Benson, presumes that a shared topic indicates a shared genre, and so includes the popular "defenses of women" into an overarching genre of "feminist polemics." This genre, however, shares more with the topical characteristics of feminist thought than it shares the formal qualities of a polemic. For instance, her fourth subcategory of the "feminist polemics," which she calls "polemics of the heart," focuses on the private writings of women about their affection for other women:

The fourth category of feminist polemic I see present includes works about relationships and daily living that celebrates love and friendship between women....Unlike the other polemic categories, personal polemic has several unique characteristics. Reactive, sustained and intermittent polemic all attack misogyny, educational deprivation, marital tyranny (and allied matters) and clearly target an audience that opposes maltreatment of women. Such polemic is overly propagandistic and didactic and either implicitly or explicitly agitates for an end to disadvantage or abuse. In personal polemic, writings about love and friendship attack or subvert patriarchal domination quite differently, through affirming women in their support and love of one another. Although some were intended for publication, the forms of secret polemic tend to be of a more personal nature--letters, diaries, memories, closet dramas, and private love poems. (Ferguson 31)

Ferguson's notion of a "personal" polemic, which primarily celebrates love and friendship, resembles more the modern feminist topics of female connectivity and the love shared among women than it resembles the form of the polemic. "Reactive," "sustained," and "intermittent" feminist polemic each are defined as public expressions of feminist anger: through rebutting an attack ("reactive"), arguing for a "change in women's condition" ("sustained") or calling for social change in the text of another kind of piece ("intermittent") (Ferguson 28-30).

Each of these polemic forms includes some of the conventions associated with the polemic, especially the public nature of such writings. Nevertheless, Ferguson has obscured the nature of the polemical defenses which do exist in the period by including these diaries, personal letters, and private poetry as a subcategory. Like Benson's search for humanist thought in the popular pamphlets, Ferguson does not delineate the topic from the form, and so she creates for her study a "genre" that does not share formal conventions. She then presumes that the genre she delineates is unified and recognized by these authors as a distinct genre. Her attempt to construct a broad category of "feminist polemics" suggests that the pro-women writers were numerous, and that such writers would have a reputation more for their political and social statements--like modern feminists--and less for their actual writing. Certainly, the women pamphleteers's pro-women arguments shaped their reputations, yet still they were primarily writers, not political activists who belong to a movement, as Ferguson's categories implicitly suggest.

Though Ferguson fails to recognize the difference between the shared topical appeals in these works and the formal conventions used to present those topics, her notion of "reactive polemic" does accurately depict the pamphlets I am considering here:

Usually fierce in tone and intensity, feminist response returned blow for blow, rebuffed arguments, and structured into their responses the need for rebuttal. The feminist writers adopted independent, no-nonsense stances and challenged not only the offending male writer but the behavior of men in general. (Ferguson 31)

Other than Ferguson's assertion that these women structured their works to encourage response, which represents an argument about the author's intention that can never be satisfactorily proven, this description is valid for

these pamphlets. Her description of the tone, as a suggestion of the implied author's personality, highlights the connection between ethos and genre. Yet her descriptions, though valid, are marred by her misreadings of the pamphlet genre as a form.

Much of Woodbridge's description of the tracts themselves includes more shrewd readings of the pamphlets, yet her argument that they are both artistic works and sophisticated jokes, instead of serious polemics and sincere defenses, again misconstrues both the nature of the audience primarily appealed to by the pamphlets and the relationship between the topical appeal of the "defense of women" and the genre used to present that topic. Nevertheless, she does accurately depict several of these pamphlets's shared features:

All [of the works of the formal controversy] foster a sense of genuine debate....All works of the formal controversy address the nature of woman in general....All works of the formal controversy use *exempla*--historical and/or literary examples, usually biblical and classical in origin, of good women....All formal controversies argue their case theoretically, relying heavily on abstractions....The characteristic literary modes of the formal controversy are the classical oration and the dialogue. The former employs a single persona, the latter two or more speakers.  
(Woodbridge 14)

All of these characteristics occur, to some extent, in these women's pamphlets. Yet Woodbridge inaccurately claims that "all formal works deal exclusively with the nature of Woman," which is not accurate for these pamphlets: Anger closely reads and critiques *Boke his Surfeit*, railing especially against the court poets who slander women for not returning their affections; Speght discusses the ethics of wife beating; Sowernam merrily "arraigns" Swetnam for his *Arraignment*, and Munda partially develops an ethic for men's treatment of their

mothers. These writers do not slavishly constrain themselves to issues of women's ontological status, and the development of that topic as a primary focus does not function as a formal convention despite Woodbridge's argument that this topic links the items of the genre of the "formal controversy" together. Yet these texts are among the ones she most heavily relies on to establish that genre. Without that topical tie, the pamphlet's other characteristics easily associate them with several other kinds of pamphlets: marriage manuals, Mother's advise books, religious tracts, and others. The personal reputations that she implicitly presumes for these writers resemble the reputations of the court poets, like Marlowe or Donne, because she implicitly assumes that their artistic detachment is almost ironic. As with Ferguson and Benson, I find that the genre that Woodbridge is attempting to delineate is too amorphous to truly function as a genre. Instead, I accept Wright's and Clark's categorization of these pamphlets under the broader headings of "defense" and "polemic," indicating similar formal and conventional features within these texts without raising the question of their connections as a genre through a shared topic. I read these writer's personal reputations as constructed in and by the pamphlet form, through Clark's and Wright's histories of the form, and I do not presume that the pro-women pamphlets were part of a larger pro-women genre.

In making the distinction between the audiences appealed to in courtly poetry and middle-class prose, I do not wish to bifurcate art from society, or rhetoric from aesthetics, or the courtier class from the bourgeoisie, as Woodbridge implicitly does. More useful, I believe, is an awareness that the Renaissance society, like any other, was a mishmash of culture, experience, individual interests and societal pressures. In such a flotsam, I believe that a more accurate way of speaking of such abstracts as "art" would be to argue that

a particular object or idea will likely appeal more to one specific kind of audience than to another--for instance, sonnets would appeal more to the courtiers, and could then be used to attract the interest of such a readership and could be used to indicate the author's reputation as a courtier. Woodbridge's implied argument, that when we are in the presence of art we cannot also be in the presence of Renaissance attitudes towards women, oversimplifies the flexibility of both art and attitudes, and fails to recognize that qualities of both art and serious debate can be used to appeal to an audience. Simultaneously, if a particular topic or form appeals more to a certain kind of audience, then it follows that a predominate use of that topic or form indicates an appeal to that kind of audience: for instance, printed editions of sermons in the Renaissance usually appealed to a middle-class, often Puritan, audiences, even though poetry may be discussed in those sermons. Finally, the inclusion of a topic or form which consistently appealed to a particular audience can be read as an appeal to that audience, even if that topic or form is couched in another genre that would not normally appeal to that audience. For instance, all of the pamphlets I consider in this dissertation include poetry, and so can be seen as also appealing to a courtier readership as well as to middle-class readers.

Finally, Woodbridge's argument that the pamphlet writers's disliked the term "pamphlet" for its negative connotations fails to make her point that these pamphlet writers see their own work as artistic. Instead, the term "pamphlet," when used to belittle an opponent, belongs to a common pamphleteer convention in which authors write scathing critiques of their competition and audience (Shepherd 11). For instance, Munda attacks Swetnam for his plagiarism:

Lord! how you have cudged your brains in gleaning multitudes of

similes, as 'twere, in the field of many writers, and threshed them together in the flour of your own devisor--and all to make a poor confused mescelline: whereas thine own barren soiled soul is not able to yield the least congruity of speech. 'Tis worthy laughter what pains you have taken in turning over Parismus, what use you make of the *Knight of the Sun*, what collections out of *Euphues*, *Amadis a Gaul*, and the rest of Don Quixote's library, sometimes exact tracing of Aesopical fables and Valerius Maximus, with the like school-boys' books. So that if these pamphleteers would severally pluck a crow of you,...let every bird take his own feather and you would be as naked as Aesop's jay. (Munda 141)

Not only does Swetnam's plagiarism indicate a lack of originality, his sources are merely school boys's books and pamphlets: such a use of the term "pamphlet" does not necessarily indicate that the writer sees her own work as more artistic than other pamphlets, instead it undermines the opponents's reading for being immature.

Attacks on other pamphleteers and humble apologies for the quality of one's own work<sup>2</sup> are usually a response to the pamphlet form's reputation and the effects that reputation has on the writer's own reputation, as Clark argues.

Pamphleteering was an occupation of low status and a bad reputation. Many of those engaged in it, especially university graduates and others who regarded or presented themselves as gentlemen, either tried to claim superiority for their own work or deliberately demeaned what they were currently writing and boasted of better things to come. (Clark 27)

Clark's argument, that such boasts were both a response to the bad reputation associated with pamphleteering and an attempt to control one's personal reputation, recognizes that such claims are a rhetorical devise and are not indicative of an attempt to present the work as art. Generally, the pamphlet form created expectations in the audience about the kind of person who would write in that form, and so the form limited the kinds of ethos appeals available to

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<sup>2</sup> I do not here mean to suggest the humility topos, simply the common, ungendered apologia for the quality of one's work.



pamphlet writers.

The pamphlet form is highly conventional, even antithetical to much original work, and those conventions infuse the women polemicists's works. Many of these conventions limited further the kinds of reputation an author could construct for herself in the genre. For instance, as Clark points out, dedications were conventionally paired, one humble, the other mocking either an "ignorant patron" or the "humble reader" (Clark 26-27). All four of these women's polemics include such dedications, with only Munda playing enough with the convention that she used poetry instead of prose and allegory instead of a plain style. Misread, the more humble dedications could be, and have been, construed as variants on the humility topos, while the mocking dedications have been seen as analogous to modern feminist anger. Nevertheless, the pamphleteers's own reputations are partially constructed by these conventions--the conventional tone of anger or mockery infused their reputation by limiting their tone. Certainly the convention does not prevent these dedications from sincerely expressing those emotions, but using the dedications for such purposes is affirmed by the convention, instead of being a challenge to it. The result of such interlacing of convention and content, here and elsewhere, is a series of potentially serious statements that can be seen as truly sincere only after the conventions that shapes them are acknowledged. The conventions indicate that mocking should occur in one of the dedications: all of the women writers choose to mock railers on women, especially Swetnam, which suggests that sincere anger is playfully presented through the appropriation of the convention. Similarly, when they use the convention of entertainingly vehement rhetoric these women are usually at their most vicious, which suggests a playful use of convention to express a "sincere" point. Such

playfulness as well as the potential for sincerity complicates their characteristics, which shapes their personal reputations as more extensive than even the virile woman or shrew stereotypes.

The women pamphleteers also play with the convention of arguing from authority in order to construct their reputations. The pamphlet form relied heavily on authoritative arguments:

[t]he pamphleteers believed stoutly in the value of authority and precedents, and had little confidence in the judgment of the individual; many pamphlets proved their points simply by listing a vast number of authorities who agreed with them, along with traditional examples. (Clark 161)

Instead of relying primarily on authority, including compiling lists of such authorities, the women pamphleteers relied more heavily on retelling their observations: Anger, for instance, describes several of her observations of human behavior, including female credulity (35), the greediness of gluttons (37), and the bitter words of rejected lovers (41). Like Christine's works, these women writers include arguments from authority, yet many of their own arguments appealed to lived experience, which indicates that a different epistemology is underpinning these works compared to more conventional Renaissance pamphlets. Conventionally the arguments from authority, and the resulting conservatism in the beliefs expressed, limited the pamphlets to reaffirming the culture instead of truly critiquing it (Jordan 2-3; Clark 37; Benson 205). These pamphleteers's arguments from experience are still limited by the culture that shaped those experiences, but these women do not, in their implied epistemology, beg the question of the validity of the culture's authority, as often occurs with arguments from highly influential authorities. Like Christine, the argument from experience validates their ethos by justifying their arguments

from lived experience. By giving themselves the reputation of extensive experience, they present their arguments as believable.

Yet these pamphlets were not serious philosophical treatises; instead they primarily appealed to their audiences through their topics, vying with each other in “the flotsam of evanescent books and pamphlets issued by Elizabethan printers” (Wright 450). Like much of our tabloid press and yellow journalism, the pamphlets combined sensationalism and readily corroborated news (Wright 436):

Dim and vague as was most of this news, it shows an alertness on the part of the average citizen towards world affairs. The news-books added one more item to the increasing variety of reading matter which attracted the eyes of busy tradesmen hurrying through St. Paul's. The ephemeral journalism of Shakespeare's time was nearly as varied, and almost as abundant in proportion to the number of readers, as similar literature is today. (Wright 436)

To succeed, the pamphlets had to be more eye-catching than aesthetically pleasing, and so the reputations constructed in them do not need to be consistent as much as they needed to be interesting. The topics ranged from repentance pamphlets, which were usually presented as the heavily moralizing last words of men about to go to the gallows (Wright 437 & 438), to travel tales of far off wonders (Wright 444), to “a whole literature” dedicated to the life of rogues (Wright 439) and prostitutes (Wright 441). Equally numerous were collections of jest books and warnings to the ungodly (Wright 459 & 463), most of which were derived from the oral culture or repeated from classical sources (Wright 463). These pamphleteers' personal reputations varied according to the author's purpose and the topics discussed. The most didactic authors wrote

...formal defense[s] or attack[s] on a specific subject or point of view, mounted with the aid of the forms and terminology of rhetoric. This form

is used in a less fragmentary way and seems to bear a less arbitrary relationship to content than, say, the underworld devices or the dialogue. But nevertheless it is, like the other, a chosen rather than a necessary structure, and the kind of material it is used to present is essentially the same, although more clearly defined. The subjects discussed in this way are various, but all of them lend themselves to polemical treatment....Such pamphlets draw attention to their formal organization, with headed chapters, numbered and subdivided, the citation of authorities, marginal notes calling attention to point of rule or indicating a transition to another section, and all the paraphernalia of learning. Rather than beguile, exhort, or terrify their readers out of vicious practices and anti-social behavior these authors choose to argue, reason and if necessary baffle with logic. (Clark 158-159)

Among the defense/attack polemical pamphleteers Clark discusses are those dealing with the value of women, and the women writers considered here all exhibit several of the genre markers Clark lists above: all use headed chapters, Sowernam using the most with eight distinct chapters; all present sometimes baffling logic, using syllogistic reasoning to prove either a particular point or to structure a section; Speght copiously cites Biblical sources, especially in her marginalia, while Munda cites several classical sources, often quoting in Latin.

For all of the similarities between these women's pamphlets and the genre of polemical or didactic defense, they also resemble the attack genre, especially its qualities of satire and criticism. As Clark describes this genre, it includes attacks on a wide range of subjects, and attacking women was a stock subject:

The second category of stock subjects for criticism or abuse consist of groups identified by traits other than profession, such as women, social upstarts, foreigners, atheists, and puritans...[B]y far the most prominent was women...[D]espite an increasing awareness of women as social beings and the growth of the ideal of monogamy, it was the vicious nature of women that dominated popular writing. (Clark 177)

Texts like Swetnam's critique of women were often little more than a conventional list of authorities who denigrated women as a sex and, as in Swetnam's text, an attempt at satire by haphazardly compiling ribald jokes and misogynistic commonplaces. Yet the "learned" defense, though often employing satire, should not be confused with the "satires" they answered. Shepherd, for instance, describes the women's works as satires. Some of the satires were rhetorically vehement polemics bewailing women's evil nature, and, as such, they are fitting counterpoints to these pamphleters's defenses of women. However, neither *Boke his Surfeit*, from the evidence we have from Anger's quotes, or Swetnam's *Arraignment*, exhibit any great learning. The dominate themes of the attacks were "women as related to men" and "women in society" (Clark 182-183). Both *Boke his Surfeit* and the *Arraignment* developed these themes, combining, at best, an attempt at satire with a compilation of jokes. This malleability between the compilation of jokes and more biting satire is reflected in the women's texts, which often combine serious defense with wit. As such, these women's reputations as witty defenders of women is complicated by the satire used, indicating a willingness to stoop to the methods of their often less than virtuous opponents.

To show how the reputations of these authors were particularly shaped by the pamphlet form, I will discuss Sovernam's pamphlet as it uses a range of topical and formal features. Ester Sovernam's pamphlet was the second in the series of three responses written against Swetnam. She comments on Speght's work to set herself apart from her while also borrowing from Speght's work, which creates connections between herself and the earlier writer. Sovernam borrows both from Speght's imagery, appropriating her image of Swetnam "vomiting" forth his text, and from her structure, including an

ontological defense of women built on many of the same biblical *exempla* that Speght used. Yet where Speght's structure is clear, if bipartied, Sowernam's is convoluted and incomplete. Her opening dedication functions like the *narratio* of an oration, introducing both the two primary themes of the pamphlet and her persona as the narrator:

Right honorable, and all others of our sex, upon my repair to London this Michealmas Term--being at supper amongst friends, where the number of each sex were equal--as nothing is more usual for table talk, there fell out a discourse concerning women, some defending others objecting against our sex. (Sowernam 87)

Though the reference to Michealmas Term may mean that this writer is a lawyer, and so male, the setting emphasizes less the author's sex and more the atmosphere of congenial discussion amongst friends, presenting the women as, at least numerically, equal to the men. Sowernam also identifies her theme as the defense of women. During this tale of the table talk, Swetnam's text is mentioned, and the narrator asks one of the men to loan her a copy. Her opinion of the work is far from congenial: "For where the author pretended to write against lewd, idle and unconstant women, he doth most impudently rage and rail generally against all the whole sex of women" (Sowernam 87). Here the second major theme is introduced, her critique of Swetnam. This presentation of her themes also functions to begin to construct her personal reputation; she depicts herself through her narrator as a hostess, as a member of the upper bourgeoisie, and as an innocent who accidentally discovers Swetnam's text. The narrator's personality is presented as convivial and congenial, far from the shrew who intentionally aggravates people. Though she does not present herself as a virgin, she later attempts to appropriate part of the "virile woman" type as the basis of her own reputation: for instance she uses

sophisticated logic and indicates her broad learning.

The conclusion of this dedication resembles a *partitio* of sorts, though not one which accurately or fully outlines the pamphlet:

In this my Apology, right honorable, right worshipful, and all others of our sex, I do in the first part of it plainly and resolutely deliver the worthiness and worth of women, both in respect of their creation as in the work of redemption. Next I show in examples out of both the Testaments what blessed and happy choice hath been made of women, as gracious instruments to derive God's blessings and benefits to mankind. In my second part I do deliver of what estimate women have been valued in all ancient and modern times, which I prove by authorities, customs and daily experiences. Lastly, I do answer all material objections which have or can be alleged against our sex; in which also I do arraign such kind of men which correspond to the humour and disposition of the author: lewd, idle, furious and beastly disposed persons. (Sowernam 87-88)

Like Speght, Sowernam's first section is a defense of women's ontological value based on a reading of the Creation story, on several statements from throughout the Bible, and on two lists of great women. The first such list of great women is derived from the Bible and the other one is derived from classical and British mythology and history.

Yet even as she begins her first section, she digresses, writing a chapter attacking both Swetnam's arguments and his person for having written so "monstrous" and "misshapen" a pamphlet. Like the first dedication, this digression functions, in many ways, to construct her reputation as someone who is not likely to respond in an unjust rage because it presents, at length, Anger's succinct claim that women's vehemence is justified when provoked. I doubt that Sowernam knew of Anger's pamphlet because her arguments do not echo Anger's rhetoric. Where Anger plays on her name to justify her anger, Sowernam uses religion: "I am not only provoked by this author to defend

women, but I am more violently urged to defend divine Majesty, in the work of his creation" (Sowernam 91). Sowernam situates her defense of women as a defense of God, appropriating Speght's rhetorical move. Both Speght and Sowernam attempt to prove that Swetnam's misogynistic misquotations of the Bible are blasphemous, yet where Speght presents that blasphemy as occurring throughout Swetnam's pamphlet, Sowernam proves it through a thorough reading of only Swetnam's first page. By thoroughly critiquing Swetnam, Sowernam adds to the personal reputation she presents in the first dedication: not only is she middle class, like her readers, and friendly, she is presented as moral for engaging in a holy work.

Where Speght attempts to unproblematically appropriate the stereotype of the "good" woman, which makes the holiness of her work more believable, if not more cloying, Sowernam mitigates the tone of the holy project with her sophisticated and learned wit. For instance, Sowernam responds to Swetnam's use of the misogynistic commonplace that women are crooked because they were made from a crooked rib by turning the logic of that argument back onto itself, and not once, but twice:

Woman was made of a crooked rib, so she is crooked of conditions. Joseph Swetnam was made as Adam of clay and dust, so he is of a dirty and muddy disposition. The inferences are both alike in either: woman is no more crooked in respect to the one, but he is blasphemous in respect of the other.... Admit that this author's doctrine be true, that woman receiveyth her forward and crooked disposition from the rib, woman may then conclude upon that axiom in philosophy, *Quicquid efficit tale, illud est magis tale*: that which giveth quality to a thing, doth more abound in that quality--as fire which heateth is itself more hot....[S]o, if woman received her crookedness from the rib, and consequently from the man, how doth man excel in crookedness, who hath more of those crooked ribs? See how this vain, furious, and idle author furnisheth woman with a argument against himself and others of his sex. (Sowernam 91-92)



Though she claims to be motivated by a desire to defend divine glory and to repudiate Swetnam's blasphemy, Sovernam includes a number of these witty, learned, satires scattered throughout her work. The resulting characteristics of her implied author's personality is more fully realized than Speght's, for she not only redefines the stereotypes of the "good" woman, and appropriates parts of those new stereotypes, she adds depth to the personality she presents. Her reputation derives from the audience's expectations based on who she seems to be, instead of on what she is. Because she hides her identity behind a pseudonym, this personality represents her personal reputation. She speaks ironically, satirically, even sarcastically, which suggests a somewhat shrewish reputation, though her learning and motives would suggest the virile woman type. Sovernam constructs her reputation as a sometimes snide, sometimes sincere, and always learned writer.

Having digressed into the attack on Swetnam, Sovernam offers another *partitio*, seeming to outline the contents of the rest of the first section, though she actually fulfills all of this outline in her second chapter. She uses this *partitio* posting to, yet again, justify her writing:

Now having examined what collections Joseph Swetnam had wrestled out of scripture to dishonour and abuse all women, I am resolved, before I answer further particulars made by him against our sex, to collect and note out of scriptures: first, what incomparable and most excellent prerogatives God hath bestowed upon women, in honour of them and their creation; secondly, what choice God hath made of women, in using them as instruments to work his most gracious and glorious designs for the benefit of mankind, both during the law of nature and of Moses; thirdly, what excellent and divine graces have been bestowed upon our sex, in the law of grace and the work of redemption; with a conclusion, that to manifest the worthiness of women they have been chosen to perform and publish the most happy and joyful benefits which ever came to mankind. (Sovernam 92)

Her repeated justifications mitigate the audience's potential reading of her as merely a shrew. She covers the material she sets out for the first section both by copiously citing the Bible and by conveniently ignoring the evidence and arguments against her position. In order to complete this "section," she includes two lists as two separate chapters. These lists appropriate the pamphlet convention of listing arguments from authority. As an example of her probably hasty composition of the piece, the fourth chapter, her second list, is actually one of two distinct chapters designated as "fourth." I will call the first of these two chapters "4a" and the second "4b," though I do not mean to suggest that one is merely a direct extension of the other.

This first section's structure is organized as a series of reasonable associations from one idea or argument to the next. Sovernam does not emulate Speght's use of a clear structure, which suggests a personality more confident in her ability to present wide-ranging ideas and less regimented in her thinking. Sovernam's personality seems inspired, if unruly: she begins with a digression, followed by a part of her confirmation, though artificially limited to evidence from the Bible and Christian tradition. Then she presents two lists which do little more than function as a series of references, and which, as evidence, rely heavily on the audience's willingness to deduce the significance of those citations and to be persuaded by those citations. Such a list is in many ways not truly a rhetorical device, for it does not argue for a position as much as it simply presents the evidence for that position. The end of 4a includes a summation of her major points of the first section and repeats the Christian focus of her evidence to that point, but it neither functions as a transition to a refutation section or as a peroration concluding the first section. Though the connections all make intuitive sense as she moves from one idea to the next, as

informal reasoning or as a rhetorical structure the section leaves much to be desired in basic organization, which indicates both hack work and a less than careful writer.

Her transition to the second part of the pamphlet is introduced by yet another epistle, the third such letter. In this epistle she announces that she will “solace myself with a little liberty” (Sowernam 98), and chapter 4b promptly surveys evidence of women’s value in classical and British history and thought, shrugging off the “holy work” tone. Presenting a very truncated history of women, Sowernam simultaneously displays her learning and offers several secular arguments for the value of women. In this chapter she also rails against men who seduce and slander women, and she presents arguments for women’s superiority over men. Finally, this oddly organized chapter concludes with a seemingly simple transition to the next chapter which proves to be a complex manipulation of metaphor and allegory:

When they [men who seduce women] have done all and gotten their purpose, then they discover all the woman’s shame and employ such an author as this (to whose Arraignment I do make haste) to rail upon her and the whole sex. (Sowernam 103)

As a complaint against some men’s betrayal of some women’s hearts and privacy, the sentence makes sense. The complexity is in the image of the narrator/implicit author making haste. The phrase seems simply metaphorical, a comment that the author is making an abrupt transition from one section to another. But much of the rest of the pamphlet depicts a fictional arraignment of Swetnam--with judges, a jury and all--turning the metaphor into a bit of fiction. The writer does hasten through the transition, but simultaneously she considerably distances herself from the narrator, who hastens physically to the

arraignment. This distance, which continues through the next few chapters, acts as a buffer between the narrator, who will read to the court the indictment against Swetnam and who will speak to all of his substantive charges against women, and the implied author, who is constructed favorably in the earlier chapters and epistles. Even though the narrator presents material which functions as another attack on Swetnam and his text, and which completes the close reading that Sovernam began in the first chapter, the implied author is not the character speaking this part of the text.

Specifically, chapter five presents the characters in this odd version of a closet drama, primarily the Judges Reason and Experience, the Jury comprised of Swetnam's five senses and the seven deadly sins, and Swetnam's council, his Conscience. Chapter six is the reading of the Indictment, and chapter seven is a refutation to the material charges that Swetnam laid on women, spoken while Swetnam stands mute to the charges raised against him. These chapters include compilations of several of the conventional topoi in women's favor, more of Sovernam's witty, learned logic, and her habitual associative reasoning. For instance, just after she cites Plato's inclusion of women in the government of his republic, Sovernam argues:

Daily experience and the common course of nature doth tell us that women were by men in [ancient] times highly valued, and in worth by men themselves preferred and held better than themselves. I will not say that women are better than men, but I will say men are not so wise as I would wish them to be, to woo us in such fashion as they do; except they should hold and account of us as their betters....Suitors do ever in their suits confess a more worthiness in the person to whom they sue. These kind of suits are from nature, which cannot deceive them: nature doth tell them what women are and custom doth approve what nature doth direct. Aristotle saith "*Omnia appetunt bonum*" (everything by nature doth seek after that which is good). Nature doth carry men with violence to seek and sue after women. Some will answer and seek to elude this maxim with a distinction: that *bonum* is duplex--*aux verum, aut apparens*, that

goodness or the thing which is good is either truly good or but apparently good. So they may say women are but apparently good. But the heathen orator, and the divine philosopher too, affirm if we follow the true direction of nature we shall never be deceived. Nature in her vehement motions is not deceived. It is natural, they will say, for the male to follow the female. So it is as natural for the female to be better than the male, as appeareth to be true in observation of the hawks: the spar-hawk is of more esteem than the musket; the goshawk is more excellent than the tercel....The like men are bound to acknowledge women....  
(Sowernam 101-102)

Within this example, Sowernam moves from the authority of Plato, to reasoning from maxims, to the authority of observation, and from women as leaders, to men's treatment of them as suitors, to the natural superiority of women. Her tendency to follow her associations, though often witty in itself, suggests that she is disjointed in her reasoning, a weakness which is confirmed in her odd, and probably hasty, structure. In Sowernam's first *partitio*, she claimed that she would respond to all material charges laid against women, yet she constrains herself to the charges that Swetnam refers to in his text and so never completes the outline she originally presented. At the end of the seventh chapter, she abruptly announces that she is called away and cannot complete the work (Sowernam 98). Yet the hastiness and heavy use of association becomes an appropriate persona for her to present given the pamphlet form--pamphlets were not supposed to be labored over. The form was occasional, and excessive work on it suggested a person with nothing better to do.

By writing disjointedly she finally indicates, as she did in the tale of the table talk, that she is a busy woman with many friends and more important concerns. She claims for herself a position of respect, as having lowered herself to write the pamphlet. This rhetorical move, which was conventional in the form, asserts the importance and honor of the author. Sowernam creates a

personal reputation that is strong willed, witty, learned, respectable, vocal, and Christian. By readily arguing from both the authority of the Bible and the classical tradition, she positions herself at the intersection between the courtly humanist and the middle class reader while constructing herself as both the shrew and virile woman. She intentionally places herself at a cusp of respectability, a cusp that she announces on her title page. Hull explains this cusp:

Buried in Swetnam's books is a reference to 'all you unmarried wantons who have 'thus unluckily made your selves neither maidens, widdowes, nor wives, but more vile then filthy channell-durt, fit to be swept out of the heart and suburbs for your Countrey' (sig. E2). Interestingly, the Sowernam pseudonym is described on the title page of *Ester hath Hang'd Haman* as 'neither Maide, Wife nor Widdowe, yet really all, and therefore experienced to defend all.' The supposedly straightforward response to Swetnam may well be just another chapter in a tongue-in-cheek satire serial. (115-116)

Sowernam uses satire to assert her ethos as complex, challenging the one dimensional stereotype of "good" women as silent, ignorant and obedient. Sowernam speaks clearly, she is educated enough to do so, she knows the words of her opponents's work and can use them against him, and she is willing to scandalize her readers (possibly, if not probably, because scandal sells), while depicting her work as a defense of God through a defense of God's creation. Sowernam creates a complex reputation for herself which includes both characteristics of the shrew and the virile woman, which undermines her audience's expectations of herself as just a stereotypical woman. She attempts to change her audience's expectations of her by using the genre and her rhetoric to present herself as more fully human than a mere type. In the next chapter, I will discuss specific stylistic techniques used by these women to

construct for themselves viable, non-stereotyped, ethos positions which present their implied authors as complex personalities instead of as merely these two-dimensional reputations.

## CHAPTER VII

## ETHOS AND STYLE IN EARLY MODERN WOMEN'S PAMPHLETS

These pamphleteers use several stylistic techniques, yet they especially use close analyses of other authors' texts to undermine the stereotypical expectations of them as naturally incompetent. For instance, Sowerham, by precisely depicting Swetnam's style and argument, proves that she knows what she is talking about, which earns for herself the right to discuss his work and his ideas. Her act of reading his writing becomes a rhetorical move used to persuade the audience into accepting her arguments against Swetnam. These pamphleteers consistently and closely read other's texts using several techniques to assess the matter and the manner of their opponents's texts, and they all consider both minute details and overall themes and premises. Rachel Speght, for instance, ranges from commenting of Swetnam's grammatical mistakes to invalidating his logic by analyzing his fallacious syllogisms. These women's defenses of women also rely heavily on their readings of their male opponents for their subject matter and as a means for attacking the overall patriarchy. Because these texts are comprised of close readings of another's text as vehicles for presenting their own arguments and ethos appeals, they ultimately require the modern reader to ask about the nature of their reading practices. In this chapter I will present what can be inferred about the nature of the early modern woman reader and the characteristics of the women pamphleteers's reading practices. Yet before I can look closely at two representative pamphlets, Anger's and Munda's, I will first explain what we know about women as readers in the early modern era, and I will quickly cover



what other scholar have thought about these women's styles.

Many modern critics seriously question whether Renaissance women could even read, let alone write, except for well-acknowledged cases of famous female patrons and aristocratic women. Certainly, many of the women who had access to printed material, either through their own reading or through listening as others read to them, could not necessarily also write. As Hull discusses in her analysis of Renaissance female readers, most of the books written for women before 1640 were written by men (Hull 4). What scant evidence remains of a female readership has to be inferred primarily from documents attesting to or justifying women's education and from suggestions by authors or printers that a female audience is intended for their texts. Even with this evidence, the likelihood of a significant female reading audience in the early modern era is still often disputed, when this female readership is not ignored outright, and little has been done to piece together the possible reading practices of these readers. Several good studies are available on the aristocratic patrons of poets, yet the aristocratic women belonged to a restricted social and economic class whose reading practices are not particularly relevant to my study. Some modern scholars have explored whether middle class women could read by hunting for evidence of women's education and by searching for evidence that texts appealed to middle class women as readers. The resulting picture is of women who may have been lucky enough to have been taught to read beyond the most basic primers and who may, if their duties permitted, have used that ability as adults. These two happenstances of teaching and time are evinced, for instance, by Rachel Speght.

From the evidence, like Juan Luis Vives' 1523 treatise, and from the example of Margaret More Roper and others, many scholars argue that

classical humanism generally affirmed and promoted some education for women, including education for upper class, non-aristocratic, women. Vives argued that the young, upper-class woman "should also study, to the full extent of her ability, grammar and rhetoric, scripture, the Church Fathers, and the classical writers such as Plato, Plutarch, Livy, Cicero, and Seneca" (quoted in Dunn 19). Unfortunately, the classical humanist notion of women's education did not last much beyond the mid and late 1500's, nor did it extend to the education of most middle class women. Much more relevant to middle class women were the boarding schools for girls that began to open in the late 1500's and early 1600's. Though, as Goreau points out, there is some evidence that some girls in the mid 1500's were allowed to go to grammar schools for a few years (Goreau 5), most girls got what little education they received from tutors at home (Goreau 6). The boarding schools, or "academies," for girls educated women in the practical skills needed for housekeeping and the frivolities needed for attracting a suitor. These girls were taught "...housewifery, cookery, fine embroidery, black work, white work, work in colors, and various sorts of other 'work' in silver, straw, glass, wax, and gum..." and "...instruction in singing, violin, lute, harpsichord, and organ, as well as country dancing..." (Goreau 6). Of these schools, only one emphasized scholarship:

Of all the "female academies," only Mrs. Bathsua Makin's school seems to have attempted a more serious academic program....The young ladies who attended her school on Tottenham High Road in London studied grammar and rhetoric, logic, languages--especially Greek and Hebrew...--as well as mathematics, geography, music, painting and poetry, among other subjects. (Goreau 6-7)

Makin's school was established after the time of the pamphlets I am considering here, though Makin's own ability to read and teach indicates the potential

success of the home tutors. The evidence for women's education in the late 1500's and early 1600's--specifically, the evidence that these authors could be seen as educated--is even more scant. Nevertheless, as Dunn notes, Richard Mulcaster, master of the Merchant Tailors School in London, advocated women's education in reading, writing, Latin, Greek, philosophy and rhetoric, as well as in a trade, in a piece written for a middle class audience (17-18). Dunn also discovered records in the Stationer's Company that indicated that there were women booksellers and printers at the time, most of whom inherited their trades from their husbands (Dunn 22). Women, Dunn explains,

were admitted to some guilds on an equal footing with men; they served as shop managers and assistants, or aided their husbands in the conduct of small business; and after the deaths of their husbands they frequently continued to run the shop or business alone. (Dunn 22)

The currently common assumption that early modern, middle class women had no opportunities to learn to read is much too broad. Certainly, within the Renaissance education system, training in reading was likely to be erratic at best. Like much of the populace, the bulk of the readers were scarcely above the functionally literate. Yet evidence for the existence of middle class women readers has also been derived from the texts that were addressed to them. Hull's book, which is primarily an annotated bibliography of Renaissance texts written for women, uses the evidence of the extant literature to prove not only the existence of a female reading public, but even the existence of books which catered to these women. Lucas's text assesses the romance genre's prescriptive presentation of the women, its repression of women's behavior, its liberation of women's imagination, and its affirmation of their self-esteem. Where Hull's study proves the existence of competent women readers, Lucas's

work indicates the sophisticated ways that they are constrained by their reading.

Hull contextualizes the history of Renaissance women's books within the broader history of print in England:

A small but steady stream of books for a female audience began to appear on the English book market in the 1570's, approximately one hundred years after Caxton printed the first book in the English language. In the period from 1475 through 1640 at least 163 books in some 500 editions were specifically directed to or printed for women readers. Eighty-five percent of them were published after 1570. The publication of this many books for women readers is persuasive evidence that a substantial number of women knew how to read English by the end of the sixteenth century, and that their needs and interests were being recognized by both writers and booksellers. The emergence of a female reading public with its own small but identifiable body of literature appears to be related to certain social and educational changes in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England and to the changing economics of the book trade. These changes included the continuing growth of a middle class with some leisure for its women; increased opportunities for education, particularly reading instruction in English for both boys and girls; ...the rise of a professional class of writers dependent upon book buyers as well as the chancy largess of patrons; and the booksellers's need for new markets. (Hull 1)

The existence of books for women indicates a female readership, and those books represent a significant percentage of the growing book trade. The evidence also indicates that these books, especially the romances, were intended for women to read privately. Though the earliest texts were often printed without any indication of an intended audience (Hull 9), later editions of these texts were often addressed specifically to women readers. The practice became particularly common for new editions in the late 1580's and the 1590's (Hull 10), and Hull concludes that the "authors and booksellers became increasingly conscious of women readers" (Hull 10). Some of the books addressed to women were these texts intended for general consumption.

Several of the other books for women were misogynistic texts that included dedications to women in order to couch the misogyny in more acceptable terms, as Swetnam so attempts to couch his own work. Finally, a few of the works dedicated to women were literary masterpieces dedicated to aristocratic women, especially to Elizabeth, like Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. The resulting collection of books for women is a compilation of rededicated texts, texts primarily aimed at misogynistic readers, fictions, literary works, religious tracts, pamphlets and guides to various housekeeping duties. The very range of these texts written with at least one woman reader in mind indicates a recognition of an audience with a variety of reading abilities, tastes and needs. Even after eliminating texts dedicated to powerful or influential female patrons and texts that were written primarily for men, the collection still indicates a readership with various interests and whose economic status ranges from the middle to upper classes. Though the number of women readers is debatable, their influence on the printing industry is relatively clear. These women readers were undoubtedly also reading the materials printed for men, and, if Speght's use of Latin is any indicator, many were able to read, at least partly, the Latin texts of the educated men as well.

These women's reading practices undoubtedly resembled many of the men's reading practices, yet they probably also faced problems common to many later women readers: especially the assumption that women are by nature immoral and the ready acceptance of misogyny. The women pamphleteers refute the endemic misogyny, but, as Lucas discusses with her assessment of Elizabethan romances, writings for women did not encourage that rebellion. Just the opposite, the romances gave women a semblance of power while they subtly encouraged women's repression. This combination of

repression and liberation in the romances

both reinforce patriarchal prescriptions for female behavior, and simultaneously offer women a version of themselves as far more independent, powerful and significant than they would have experienced themselves in any other area of their lives. (Lucas 1-2)

These texts open a space for these opposing forces by constructing “prescriptive and repressive...roles for the woman reader” in which the author constrains the range of the readers’s responses while presenting women with positive, if patriarchal, role models which the women readers are encouraged to emulate (Lucas 4, 17). Despite these texts’ repressive rhetoric, Lucas still finds the romances to be more freeing than domesticating:

If the casual reader had been a woman living in the latter half of the sixteenth century...she might have found much good in [romances]: an opportunity to stretch her horizons--historically, geographically and mythologically--and to expand her sense of knowledge; a space where women can argue on the same terms as men, in which their powers of speech and rhetoric equal, if not surpass, those for men; a romance world, in which women’s concerns are paramount, and where women’s thoughts, feelings and actions are accorded a significance seldom granted them elsewhere. (Lucas 39)

Like many modern texts, Renaissance works were often implicitly or explicitly repressive, while others were hollowly apologetic for their misogyny, or were liberating and affirming in an impossible fantasy that could never be realized. Though the rhetoric of these texts limits women’s behavior, the texts themselves create a space that allows for freedom of thought and for mental escape into a fictive world which affirmed their abilities and concerns. As reading material, the romances allowed women to respond with some trust in the author, unlike many other Renaissance texts that immasculated women.

Yet many of the texts that were dedicated to women are infused with anti-women biases: biases that the authors often apologized for in their dedications. Yet these apologies, as Schibanoff argues, are patently hollow:

Authorial apologies to the female reader for antifeminist texts are, clearly enough, something other than heartfelt laments. They are attempts both to intimidate her and, borrowing Judith Fetterley's term, to immasculate her. They warn her that the written traditions of anti feminism have contemporary guardians and custodians who will not allow these texts to disappear. If the text is "fixed" in this fashion, then the only solution to the otherwise irremediable problem of the hostile text is for the female reader to change herself: she must read not as a woman, but as a man, for male readers, according to the *topos*, are neither offended nor troubled by literary misogyny. (Schibanoff 85)

As an immasculated reader, a woman could agree with the misogyny in a text by denying her own gender. As now, this method of capitulating derives from an attempt to read as a man. Though the particular behaviors imposed on women in the Renaissance differ from our own, the women readers's responses to misogyny were generally limited to these versions of resisting or capitulating to the text. The options for Renaissance women readers were limited, but a more true resistance was viable, as evinced in the pamphleteers's texts. To truly reject the constructions of women readers's selves offered up in such texts, the women pamphleteers present extremely close readings of their opponents's words. Their close yet resistant readings allow them to refute the assumptions behind the arguments their opponents's present.

Much of the modern study of gendered reading practices is limited to studies of the reading practices of students and to feminist literary critics' use of reader-response criticism (Flynn 267). Little work has been done on non-literary, adult reading techniques, and there are even fewer studies of the traces of the gendered reading practices of historical women. Schibanoff has

discussed the connections between early women's writings and Fetterly's construction of the "immasculated" woman reader, and she sees the art of reading as a woman as the "intellectual and literate act of re-reading" (Schibanoff 101). Louise Rosenblatt's discussion of the reader also illuminates these pamphleteers's practice of close reading, for she argues that reading is active, which she depicts as a "'transactional' relationship with the text" (ix). Though Rosenblatt's interest is in aesthetic reading, as in the reading of poetry, she defines the nature of nonaesthetic reading in comparison to it:

The distinction between aesthetic and nonaesthetic reading, then, derives ultimately from what the reader does, the stance that he adopts and the activities he carries out in relation to the text. At the extreme efferent [non-aesthetic] end of the spectrum, the reader disengages his attention as much as possible from the personal and qualitative elements in his response to the verbal symbols; concentrates on what the symbols designate, what type may be contributing to the end result that he seeks--the information, the concepts, the guides to action, that will be left with him when the reading is over. (Rosenblatt 27)

The women pamphleteers use this efferent, transactional reading practice: they read the text in dialogue with it, focusing on the meanings they are left with from the text. Yet they use the active reading process as they reread the text as women as a means of avoiding the trap of immascultation in their resistant readings.

Not surprising, their close, active readings of Swetnam focus on redefining the constructions of women which he relies on. For instance, Swetnam asserts that any woman who rejects his presentation of women must be guilty of being vile herself. Such women, he goes on to argue, should be silent in order to hide their guilt. He then says that any woman who is not vile should also be silent for the matter does not concern her. In either case, all



women must accept his construction of them and his limitation on their behavior. Munda, addressing Swetnam, will have none of it:

[Y]ou surmise that, inveighing against poor illiterate women, we might fret and bite the lip at you; we might repine to see ourselves baited and tossed in a blanket, but never durst in open view of the vulgar either disclose your blasphemous and derogative slanders or maintain the untainted purity of our glorious sex. Nay, you'll put gags in our mouths and conjure us all to silence; you will first abuse us, then bind us to the peace. We must be tongue-tied, lest in starting up to find fault we prove ourselves guilty of those horrible accusations. (Munda 137)

By closely reading Swetnam, and then by presenting the hypocrisy buried in his premises, Munda opens a space for her own resistance. By actively reading against his text, she can then speak for herself.

These women did not just read as women, they read as people in their period, and, as Crane has argued, early modern readers read materials, in part, for quotes and arguments that they could repeat in their own works. By looking at the function of the commonplace book in Renaissance England, Crane has reconstructed another way that Renaissance reader read:

During this period, the twin discursive practices of "gathering" these textual fragments and "framing" or forming, arranging, and assimilating them created for English humanists a central mode of transaction with classical antiquity and provided an influential model for authorial practice and for authoritative self-fashioning. Gathering and framing were not just rhetorical strategies; they were basic discursive practices, formulated in response to the pressures and opportunities of the historical moment...and constitutive of social, economic, political and literary discourse. (Crane 3-4)

The various bits of a text functioned, as Crane explains, as simultaneously part of the discourse in which they appeared and as potentialities--as suggestive references that have had meaning in other texts and could be used in even

more texts. Each commonplace, then, would call to mind other places where it has been used or more ways in which it could be used. As such, the commonplace functioned as more than our truism--as more than free floating bits of common knowledge or clichés. Instead, they represent a set of signs of one's education, breadth of knowledge, and, when used well, intellectual ability. As such, Renaissance readers read not only to understand a text, but to assess it and to borrow from it. The habit of gathering quotes and framing them in new ways discouraged passive or linear reading. Instead, readers would consider the possibilities for the commonplaces as much as they would consider the quotes in any particular context. The act of reading in the Renaissance is much more intertextually astute than is typical of many twentieth century readers.

As Clark shows in her extensive study of the pamphlets, the early modern pamphlet writers were as comfortable with the commonplace as were educated men:

... rhetoric had considerable bearing on the content of the pamphlets as well as on their arrangement, in that one of the chief means of expansion and amplification, and also one of the sources of invention...[,] was the commonplace.... (Clark 225)

Though many Renaissance thinkers extensively used and reused commonplaces, the pamphlets were generally shaped as more than merely borrowings from a commonplace book--though Swetnam, and others, did write texts which consisted primarily of commonplaces. Clark discuss the relationship between the styles popular in the pamphlets and the various intellectual and social traditions these styles were derived from, in order to argue that learned commonplaces were often used as a marker of sophistication:

The conventions of popular writing demanded that the authors show themselves as aware of literary fashions, and many of the learned trappings of these pamphlets might well be ascribed, not to the reader's genuine interest in citations from Aristotle or Juvenal, but to the authors's desire to parade newly-acquired learning (Clark 243)

Clark's study also serves as a primer of the stylistic conventions and traditions common in the pamphlets, and so it serves to contextualize the stylistic features in the four women's polemical tracks. Though the topics and the politics in the pamphlets were primarily conservative, the styles in these pamphlets were often quite inventive:

Stylistically, they were the product of a unique combination of influences, some of them traditional, others in line with the most contemporary currents of thought, brought together to create a new mode of writing which has a vitality and appeal that an acquaintance with their subject-matter only would never lead one to suspect. (Clark 224)

As such, many of the pamphlet's styles indicate a general sophistication among the middle class readers. The stylistic conventions of the pamphlets relate to, but are not dominated by, Renaissance thought about rhetoric and stylistic conventions:

The anti-Ciceronian movement in literary prose, the turn from connection, balance, conjunction, and long sentences constructed with carefully subordinated clauses, to aphorism, brevity and disjunction, had its analogies and parallels in popular prose, but there was no sudden transition....Undeniably the pamphlets showed a trend towards plainer writing, even though less lettered authors continued to have recourse to elaborate figures of speech, Ciceronian structures, and the devices of Euphism in their striving for effect. (Clark 231)

As a group, the pamphlets have a tentative connection to the stylistic movements popular in the intellectual circles. In the women's texts, the

movement towards a plainer style is present, though only inconsistently practiced. The first of the texts, Anger's, is highly Euphuistic, and the last of the texts, Munda's, is often ornate. Yet in all of the pamphlets there are several short, pithy, witty comments. Of all the stylistic influences on these texts, Clark argues, the most significant was the oral tradition. She sees the influence of the oral tradition in the pamphleteers's "[heavy reliance] on customary usage, idioms and proverbs, punning and word play, requiring to be read aloud" (Clark 243). This influence can be readily heard in one of Sovernam's poems, which, if read silently seems satirical, but, if read aloud, allowing the rollicking rhythm to dominate the voice, comes off as rather funny:

An idle companion was raging of late,  
 Who in fury 'gainst women expresseth his hate:  
 He writeth a book, an *Arraignment* he calleth,  
 In which against women he currently bawleth.  
 He deserveth no answer but in ballad or rhyme  
 Upon idle fantasies who would cast away time:  
 Any answer may serve an impudent liar,  
 Any mangy scabbed horse doth fit a scaled squire.  
 (Sovernam 115)

Sovernam's poem requires the reader to say the words aloud to hear the tonality of the mockery implicit in the rhythm. For Clark, this need to read the piece aloud follows naturally from the kinds of readers the pamphleteers were writing to:

If we take into account the nature of the pamphleteers' audience, this requirement [to read the writing aloud] seems perfectly reasonable; they were, after all, more used to hearing than to reading, and in particular to hearing spoken poetry, or, at least, verse. (Clark 243)

Clark characterized the pamphlets as having a "loose conversational flow"

while often engaging in a copious, ornamented rhetoric.

The women's stylistic choices reflect more than sophistication; they function as a vehicle for solidifying their ethos appeals. Though the theory of rhetoric at the time would limit the notion of "rhetoric" to just those stylistic devices, as Clark argues, the practice in the pamphlets did not evince a separation between style and meaning:

[t]he...confining of rhetoric to verbal techniques and to the schemata of words rather than of thought was important in the history of logic and rhetoric during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but had no direct effect on the pamphlets. (Clark 231).

These women use their style to support their ethos, which is a common rhetorical move. But because the issue at hand, women's worth, impinges on their personal reputations, these pamphlets are also using style, especially the style of their reading, to support their pro-women arguments. Like men, they are stylistically skillful; like men, they can use the gathering and framing reading techniques; like men, they can read actively, and so not capitulate to the text. For instance, as Henderson and McManus and Shepherd discuss, these women's use of style, particularly of exempla and puns, is a vehicle for meaning. In Henderson and McManus's estimation, argument by example indicates both a cognitive habit and an appropriation of the oppositions's sources against that opposition.

[Their] frequent use of argument by example testifies to the habit of moving immediately from the specific to the general...All [of these women] employed argument by example, assuming equally with the misogynists the validity of this type of proof but countering their examples with biblical and classical stories of virtuous women....Like their adversaries, the feminist writers appeal to classical and later authorities; Plato is a favorite classical authority, cited by Anger, Sowernam, and Munda, but Aristotle, Protagoras, Horace, and others also appear, along with later poets like

Ariosto. (Henderson and McManus 26, 35)

Their style of using examples is complicated by their context, for it underscores their precarious ethos positions and the extent that the misogynistic assumptions are affirmed by the culture. Moving their arguments from the specific to the general is not surprising given the depth of misogyny at the time: arguing from the stereotypes of women would have predetermined the failure of their arguments, and, so, of their ethos positions. Though several stereotypes of women were common, none affirm the worth of thinking, vocal women as a group; even the virile woman is constructed as an extremely rare, and hence singular, exception.

Similarly, Shepherd notes that these women's use of puns focus the reader on the language of the argument: "Puns perform a function similar to repetition--they make us aware of the words we are reading. They break our perhaps uncritical involvement in the argument and force us to notice the choice of language" (Shepherd 15). As with repeating words used by the opposition, a technique heavily employed by Sowerham, puns illuminate the way an argument is presented, and so make a reader conscious of the implications of other meanings, of other ways of looking at the ideas. All the women polemicists use puns--even though some of those puns are clichés, and often bad clichés, like Speght's reference to marriage and as a "merry-age." Puns illuminate the extent that misogyny, and women's degrading ontological status, are built into the language: like the way "whore" only refers to women. They also highlight the degree that the loaded language limited and constructed women's ethos positions. Though puns were very common at the time, and certainly are not an inherently feminine stylistic device, they still encourage a reader to

consider the limitations the language places on these women's arguments.

One significant difference between the copious style generally practiced by the pamphleteers and the style present in these women polemicists's writings is the hyperbolic degree to which they often apply the techniques. The excessiveness of the Euphuisms in Anger, in effect out euphuizing Euphues, draws the readers's attention, again, to the language. It proclaims loudly these women's knowledge of particular tropes, which emphasizes the "art" of their labors and suggests that their rhetoric conveys meaning. Interestingly, Anger begins the body of her tract not with a comment on women or misogyny, but with a complaint about rhetoric:

The desire that every man hath to show his true vein in writing is unspeakable, and their minds are so carried away with the manner as no care at all is had of the matter. They run so into rhetoric as oftentimes they overrun the bounds of their own wits, and go they know not whither. (Anger 32)

For Anger, the intelligent use of rhetoric is part of what the "wit" conceives, and an uncontrolled use of rhetoric undercuts, even eliminates, an argument. The decision, then, to use style excessively in her own work functions as a statement about style and language. These women's use of excessive style calls attention to the particulars in language which constrain their positions and arguments. In response to this excessiveness, several modern critics have attempted to justify these polemicists's styles.

Modern critics have attempted to justify Anger's style, though they vary in their readings from dismissive to celebratory. Wright simply repeats Anger's own justification: "[m]oved by the impudence of this tract, she is led to make an old-fashioned recital of man's iniquity and woman's virtues" (Wright 476). He presents her work as "old-fashioned" by drawing connections between her

words and the various medieval debates about women, which bypasses her anger and mitigates her stylistic excessiveness. Though Benson does not dismiss her work for being “old-fashioned” in purpose and style, she does dismiss her for using a radical style to promote conservative beliefs:

Stylistically [Anger's *Protection*] shares more with the genre of antifeminist satire than with humanist defense. It is an experiment in the manipulation of a created voice, a sort of dramatic monologue spoken in the persona of an angry woman, just as much of *Mulierum Pean* is spoken in the voice of Venus, and just as antifeminist pieces, such as the *Scholehouse*, are spoken in the persona of an angry man. The unprecedented use of an angry female voice as author of the piece is the key to its attractiveness, its seeming radicalness, its ambiguity, and, finally, to its support of the status quo. Anger represents her act of speaking as a radical departure from traditional female behavior;...yet she does not represent her own speaking out as signaling the dawn of a new age, a time in which control of the female image will be or should be wrested from male hands. (Benson 224-225)

Though Benson does argue that the voice of an angry female is unusual, she indicates that this persona is a reasonable artistic development given the existence of the angry male persona. For Benson, Anger's position is conservative because Anger's piece does not rely on humanist argument concerning women. Benson dismisses Anger's “radical” rhetoric because of Anger's seeming affirmation of the “status quo.”

Nevertheless, Anger's rhetoric is consistently seen as forceful and energetic, and Beilin sees that energy as shocking and entertaining. For instance, Beilin emphasizes Anger's abrupt departure from traditional female style:

...[Anger's] style differs profoundly from the almost universal restraint of women's works that preceded hers, rather than being pious and disciplined, it conveys the fertility of a mind whizzing from idea to idea, excited, determined, willing to use any means to make the point....The



jingling of rhymes, parallel constructions, and climactic arrangement bespeak a writer who labors for a style to match the persona of Anger, a startlingly new character in the female canon. (Beilin 251)

By identifying some of the particular stylistic features that Anger uses, Beilin recognizes the rhetorical impact of this voice: this implied author is highly emotional, carefully organized, intellectually resourceful, and adventurous. Beilin continues her assessment of Anger's style, considering the nature of her arguments: "Anger's own style is an entertaining mix of supposition, learned glosses of Latin tags, expostulation and "proofs" of woman's virtuous character and man's folly, intended to justify women rather than change their lot" (Beilin 251). The use of commonplaces, manipulations of syllogistic reasoning, and suppositions, for Beilin, is entertaining, and it indicates a playfulness with the language that undermines the ways that language conveyed the misogynistic tradition. As such, Beilin celebrates Anger's style and her use of convention to open a new space for women's voices. Ferguson, who considers Anger's work as a polemic, is even more celebratory:

In the first sustained reactive feminist polemic by a woman in English, Jane Anger vociferously demanded rights for women and registered serious opposition to the behavior of men (and apparently one in particular) toward women....Vehement and vitriolic in her tirade..., Anger resolutely responded to a particular detractor (and any others) who dared call women sexually inappeasable[, c]ontemptuously scorning men who toyed with women....(Ferguson 10)

Ferguson, primarily taken with the angry tone, indicates the degree of emotion suggested in the piece, and affirms this anger as feminist speech.

Munda's "vociferous" tone is also much mentioned by the critics, though that tone strikes these critics differently. Beilin, who acknowledges that Munda "established her own credibility through a pious dedication to her mother, 'Lady

Prudentia Munda,'” (Beilin 263), sees Munda as fashioning a persona “who at first speaks loudly and clearly, sometimes bitterly, sometimes learnedly, and always with conviction” (Beilin 264). Beilin uses the term “vociferous” (Beilin 265) to emphasize the anger in the piece, and she emphasizes its “rhetorical” purpose--as not being a “demand for change” (Beilin 265). She characterizes the tone as paradoxical (Beilin 265), which leaves unassessed the tone’s significance. Henderson and McManus comment on Munda’s frequent and witty use of invective and her ability to attack a wide range of Swetnam’s characteristics in a signal passage (Henderson and McManus 36), but they, like Beilin, do not interpret the meaning conveyed through that tone. Woodbridge describes Munda’s work as simply a “good rant” (Woodbridge 99). She particularly looks at the effects of Munda’s style on her tone:

Munda’s very syntax suggests breathless rage; unwilling to interrupt the volcanic flow, she seldom comes to a full stop....The essay is peppered with neologisms: standard English proved inadequate to convey Munda’s wrath....Munda’s pugnacity leaps from every line. Sowernam had envisioned a courtroom, Speght a chivalric combat, Munda presents herself as a street scrapper, her confrontation with Swetnam as an open brawl; a gang of women will pounce on Swetnam and savage him. This is no debate: it is a mugging. (Woodbridge 100-101)

Woodbridge follows this reading with a discussion of Speght’s, Sowernam’s and Munda’s tones as they compare Swetnam to mythological or typical dogs. For Munda, Woodbridge notes, Swetnam “is an ordinary English mutt--curish, mangy, vomiting in the streets....[Munda], in contrast, is a woman of erudition: she reveals this through Latinate neologisms, classical allusions, and....syllogistic logic” (Woodbridge 101). Woodbridge’s comments on the effect of Munda’s style indicate the energy, intelligence and anger which characterizes Munda’s changing emotions. Yet, like most of the critics,

Woodbridge dismisses one of the most consistent and developed rhetorical moves in these pamphlets: "Even Munda at times plays the literary critic. She is hampered by Speght's and Sovernam's thoroughness: But she adds objections to Swetnam's trite proverbs, mixed metaphors, and dismal doggerel" (Woodbridge 102). Woodbridge implies that Munda is simply adding more to those readings without considering the significance of those additions. Nevertheless, her depiction of Munda's tone, and the style used to present that tone, is generally accurate to the piece.

These pamphleteers's styles indicate the range of emotions expressed by these implied authors: highlighting, contrasting and elaborating on the personality traits and reputations created through the use of genre. The angry, shrewish, excessive tone in these pamphlets is offset, to different degrees, by the skillful analyses and virile intelligence displayed in these women's close readings. Speght even allows herself several wry remarks, though those comments are deeply constrained by her ethos as the stereotypically "good" woman. Yet Speght's second part comments on Swetnam as if she were a red-pen editor of his faulty logic, worse style, and inept grammar. Her style of active reading characterizes Swetnam as a crude fool, and at the same time her close reading and sharp tone reflects back on her ethos in order to present her character as somewhat more complex than the good young woman stereotype that she attempts to enact. Sovernam, like Speght, uses the style of close reading. She devotes her entire first chapter to that analysis, which functions as a tangent in her structure but which creates an ethos of precise knowledge and skillful evaluation. Also, Sovernam devotes the bulk of her second section to a transactional reading of Swetnam's words, framed satirically as Swetnam's arraignment. As Woodbridge implies, there appears little reason for Munda to

also comment on Swetnam's logic, rhetoric, and grammar, yet she also uses close reading techniques. Finally, Anger, who closely read the *Boke his Surfeit*, which never went to print, has even less apparent reason for analyzing a particular text. Yet to an extent that rivals Speght, Anger analyzes the *Boke*. Anger and Munda need not have used close readings to make their arguments, yet they do. The rest of this chapter will look at the style of their transactional, gendered readings, both as it indicates the reading practices used by these women and as it affirms and deepens their personal reputations.

As I have already quoted, Jane Anger begins the body of her defense with a comment on rhetoric, which indicates her awareness of the meanings conveyed by style and which indicates that her text is both a defense of women and is an attack on misogynistic rhetoric. Though her two dedications indicate that her ultimate purposes are to reconstruct women's ontological status and to express the rage felt by women who cannot construct their own reputations, she makes these points through the vehicle of an attack against one specific writer's pamphlet. The abrupt transition between the two dedications to her comments about rhetoric and her close reading of the one pamphlet suggests that these issues--misogyny, status, reputation, rhetoric, and reading--are closely related for Anger, so closely that she does not explain that relationship to her readers.

The dedications, as was conventional at the time, address two separate groups, present two separate tones, and serve two distinct purposes. Her first dedication, made to upper class women in a respectful tone, defines the characteristics of aristocratic women and implicitly questions the ontological status normally given to them. During this presentation of her intended reader, she indicates a dislike of obscure writing:

I will not urge reasons because your wits are sharp and will soon

conceive my meaning, [nor] will I be tedious lest I prove too too troublesome, nor over-dark in my writing for fear of the name of a riddler. But, in a word, for my presumption I crave pardon because it was Anger that did write it: committing your protection, and myself, to the protection of your selves, and the judgment of the cause to the censures of your just minds.... (Anger 31-32)

She depicts her women readers as sophisticated and intelligent, refuting the stereotypes of women as dim-witted or as merely nags. She refuses to obfuscate her material, which indicates that such writing deserves censure as more tedious than artistic. Unlike those men who she characterizes as distracted by their own rhetoric, she refuses to use excessive ornamentation. In her second dedication, to the middling sort of woman and to all men, she attacks men's slanders of women:

Fie on the falsehood of men, whose minds go oft a-madding and whose tongues cannot so soon be wagging, but straight they fall a-tattling! Was there ever so abused, so slandered, so railed upon, or so wickedly handled undeservedly, as are we women? (Anger 32)

Her attack on male tattle-tales rejects the community's gossip as a legitimate influence on women's reputations, while her ranting style allows her to forcefully construct men in the female role of the gossip, which highlights the way the loaded language promotes the notion of the garrulous female by using the same terms to describe men. She does not attempt to completely restructure women's ethos--neither as their ontological status nor as their particular kinds of reputations--and she certainly is not attempting to create political, economic or legal change. Instead she is writing, as she titles it, a "protection," which includes advice to women on how to best protect themselves, analyses of how women are blamed for their maltreatment, and an assessment of *Boke his Surfeit*.

Her reading of the *Boke* is in some ways quite congenial to the author, particularly because this unknown author was a good writer, unlike Swetnam. She does condemn the genre of such surfeits generally, and this one in particular, because of the resulting loss of reputation for the particular women referred to in such texts. Yet she acknowledges his skillful use of rhetoric to hide the offensive material in pleasurable reading:

Among the innumerable numbers of books to that purpose, of late--unlooked for--the new Surfeit of an old Lover...came by chance to my hands: which, because as well women as men are desirous of novelties, I willingly read over. Neither did the ending thereof less please me than the beginning, for I was so carried away with the conceit of the Gent. as that I was quite out of the book before I thought I had been in the midst thereof--so pithy were his sentences, so pure his words and so pleasing his style. The chief matters therein contained were of two sorts: the one in the dispraise of man's folly, and the other invective against our sex; *their* folly proceeding of their own flattery joined with fancy, and *our* faults are through our folly, with which is some faith. (Anger 33)

Much like Helen in Gorgias's *Encomium of Helen*, Anger finds herself befuddled by rhetoric. Unlike Gorgias's Helen, Anger recognizes that she is befuddled, and reads past the rhetoric to identify the text's thesis. She presents her own thesis, that the *Boke* is offensive, within this narrative about her reading. She happens on the book, and, like all voracious readers, reads it for its novelty: she praises the manner of the book, mentioning that his skill made it a fast read. Hard upon that praise, she summarizes and critiques his matter. Just before she narrates her reading she briefly and sharply critiques rhetoric, especially rhetoric used against women, and she analyses those circumstances in which men think that they have surfeited on love. She forcefully argues that the women involved in such situations are more offended against by men than willing to be with them. The text discusses the dangers of rhetoric for women,

and the sudden shift from the praise of the author's skill to a description of the subject results in an enactment of, and a resistance to, becoming an "immasculated" reader. Reading the text as a man, she could appreciate the rhetoric, yet recalling that she is a woman inspires her anger at his abuse of rhetoric to so befuddle her.

Anger's reading, then, is self-reflective, and she also uses her reading to open spaces for her own thinking and voice. Throughout the text she indicates that she is responding to particular sections in the *Boke*, though sometimes she leaves off a discussion of a section of the *Boke* because she either has her own material to add or she does not want to reveal too much of the *Boke*, in order to allow the printer to make some profit. For example, she uses her reading of his writing as a template on which to write her own meanings when she moves from one section of the *Boke* to the next:

Having made a long discourse of the gods, censure concerning love, he leaves them (and I them with him) and comes to the principal object and general foundation of love, which he affirmeth to be grounded on women. And now beginning to search his scroll, wherein are taunts against us, he beginneth and saith that we allure their hearts to us. Wherein he saith more truly than he is aware of: for we woo them with our virtues and they wed us with vanities; and men, being of wit sufficient to consider of the virtues which are in us women, are ravished with the delight of those dainties, which allure and draw the sense of them to serve us--whereby they become ravenous hawks, who do not only seize upon us but devour us. Our good towards them is the destruction of ourselves; we being well formed are by then foully deformed. (Anger 35)

She follows this reading of his words with her own invective on how men ruin women, how they judge women on their beauty, and how they accuse women of nagging. In each case she turns the commonplaces into vehicles to praise women or blame men: she rewrites what she reads as she reads it. This stylistic

devise of presenting an active reader allows her to reject the text's attempt to constrain her into a particular set of gender roles, as the romances so constrained many readers. Nor is this process purely a rebellion, for such rebellious reading would result in 1) not finishing the *Boke* or 2) rejecting his points outright. On several occasions, she concurs with his reading: for instance in reference to "slothful King Sardanapalus," she says that it is "truly set down in that *Surfeit*" (Anger 34). By rejecting, accepting and modifying his arguments, she engages in a dialogue with the text on (almost) equal terms, despite his rhetoric or her gender roles: she successfully "resists" the text's limitations on her by maintaining her own independent thinking.

She uses this reading style to not only open up a space for her own voice, but to correct and to satirize his arguments. One of her corrections shows that he needed to consider more fully the story from which one of the misogynistic commonplaces is derived:

Yet it grieves me that faithful Deianira should be falsely accused of her husband Hercules' death, seeing she was utterly guiltless (even of thought) concerning any such crime. For had not the Centaur's falsehood exceeded the simplicity for her too too credulous heart, Hercules had not died so cruelly tormented nor the monster's treason been so unhappily executed. But we must bear with these faults, and with greater than these; especially seeing that he which set it down for a maxim was driven into a mad mood through a surfeit, which made him run quite beside his book and mistake his case: for where he accused Deianira falsely he would have condemned Hercules deservedly.  
(Anger 37)

By reading beyond the commonplace, by presenting the rest of the story, she corrects the material she is reading in the *Boke*. The knowledge gained in her reading of the Hercules myth becomes a base on which to reconstruct his mistaken reading of the story and to critique the author for his "mad mood." Her



style allows her to indicate that she is a knowledgeable, decent woman, despite her shrewish anger.

Anger relies on that base of trust in her knowledge and her decency when she uses her reading style to satirize the *Boke*. Her satiric technique is quite specific: she satirizes commonplaces about women's ontological status or behavior, as they are mentioned in the *Boke*, by replacing "women" with "men." The following are two examples: the first writes men's ontological status into six types usually conferred on women, the second satirizes the courtesy books which constrain women's behaviors by applying those rules to men:

A) Euthydemus made six kind[s] of women, and I will approve that there are so many of men, which be: poor and rich, bad and good, foul and fair....Of these sorts there are none good, none rich or fair long. But if we do desire to have them good, we must always tie them to the manger and diet their greedy paunches, otherwise they will surfeit! What shall I say? Wealth makes them lavish, wit knavish, beauty effeminate, poverty deceitful and deformity ugly. (Anger 37)

B) Tibullus, setting down a rule for women to follow, might have proportioned this platform for men to rest in. And might have said: Every honest man ought to shun that which detracteth both health and safety from his own person, and strive to bridle his slanderous tongue. Then must he be modest and show his modesty by his virtuous and civil behaviors; and not display his beastliness through his wicked and filthy words. For lying lips and deceitful tongues are abominable before God. (Anger 38)

Like the quote in which she reads one text to comment on another, these quotes reread Euthydemus and Tibullus to satirize the *Boke's* reliance on them--as well as simply satirizing these two commonplaces as *topoi*. As a technique for developing an ethos, it shapes her reputation as a sophisticated reader who can readily use the reading techniques of gathering and framing for her own ends. For the last few pages of her text Anger allows herself, as Woodbridge would say, a "good rant," primarily against the fouled logic of vain and

lecherous suitors and who brag of their (non-)deeds. She generalizes the evil gossip of some men to the behavior of all men and rails on rashly and unreasonably, which may have wrecked her carefully constructed ethos. As invective, though, it is a bit of fun at men's expense:

It is a wonder to see how men can flatter themselves with their own conceits. For let us look, they will straight affirm that we love: and if then lust pricketh them, they will swear love stingeth us; which imagination only is sufficient to make them essay the scaling of half a dozen of us in one night, when they will not stick to swear that if they should be denied of their requests death must needs follow. Is it any marvel that they surfeit, when they are so greedy?...Well, the onset given, if we retire for a vantage they will straight affirm that they have got the victory. Nay, some of them are so carried away with conceit that, shameless, they will blaze abroad among their companions that they have obtained the love of a woman, unto whom they never spake above once, if that....Their fawning is but flattery; their faith falsehood; their fair words allurements to destruction; and their large promises tokens of death, or of evils worse than death....There glozing tongues, the preface to the execution of their vile minds; and their pens, the bloody executioners of their barbarous manners. A little gall maketh a great deal of sweet sour: and a slanderous tongue poisoneth all the good parts in man. (Anger 42)

Even though ranting is common in the pamphlets, Anger's rants, like the one above, tend to overwhelm her more sedate readings, and they may construct her reputation as more of a shrew than of a complex, individuated personality. Yet her stylistic technique of presenting active, transactional rereadings of the *Boke* repeatedly trouble any easy designation of her implied author as only a shrew.

Munda, as Woodbridge claims, also rants well. She does attempt to present herself as learned, but unlike Anger, she demonstrates her knowledge along with her righteous railing against Swetnam. One of her rare calm moments occurs in her first dedication, to her "mother" the Lady Prudentia Munda. In this poem, which celebrates mothers and their work, she explains

that her own education resulted from her mother's diligence: "...Seeing you still / Are in perpetual labour with me, even until / The second birth of education perfect me.." (Munda 127). In her second dedication, which is another poem, she asserts Swetnam's ignorance based in part on the quality of works he quotes (Munda 128). One of her main themes of the pamphlet is her notion that the quality of one's sources for gathering quotes matters because that quality effects one's meaning and indicates one's sophistication. Swetnam cites the least sophisticated sources, and his incompetent patchwork of them repeatedly attracts her anger. She also recognizes that Swetnam is not unusual, and copiously attacks all such "foul-mouthed railers" (Munda 131) copiously:

The itching desire of oppressing the press with many sottish and illiterate libels stuffed with all manner of ribaldry and sordid inventions--when every foul-mouthed malcontent may disgorge his Licambean poison in the face of all the world--hath broken out into such a dismal contagion in these our days, that every scandalous tongue and opprobrious wit, like the Italian mountebanks, will advance their peddling wares of detracting virulence in the public piazza of every stationer's shop. As printing, that was invented to be the storehouse of famous wits, the treasure of divine literature, the pandect admintainer of all sciences, is become the receptacle of every dissolute pamphlet--the nursery and hospital of every spurious and penurious brat which proceeds from base, phrentical, brain-sick babblers....[W]oman...is generally become the subject of every pedantical goose-quill. Every fantastic poetaster, which thinks he hath licked the vomit of his Coryphaeus and can but patch a hobbling verse together, will strive to represent unseemly figments imputed to our sex (as a pleasing theme to the vulgar) on the public theatre: teaching the worser sort, that are more prone to luxury, a compendious way to learn to be sinful. (Munda 130-131)

Munda connects the attack on women to the incompetent gathering and framing employed by unsophisticated readers. For Munda, printing should be used only for ethical and artistic writing, and not for making the hobbling verse and unseemly fragments which were common in much of pamphlet literature, which

appealed only to the vulgar, and which encouraged sinfulness.

Her own reading style is exhibited in her copious attacks on Swetnam and others of his ilk, and the very skill of her reading has generated serious questions about the gender of the author. For instance, Nancy Miller believes that Munda's ready use of Latin indicates that she must be a man and must have received a man's education. For instance, Munda argues that:

[T]hough feminine modesty hath confined our rarest and ripest wits to silence, we acknowledge it our greatest ornament; but when necessity compels us, 'tis as great a fault and folly *loquenda tacere, ut contra gravis est culpa tacenda / loqui*. Being too much provoked by arraignments, baitings and rancorous impeachments of the reputation of our whole sex, *stula est clemntia...periturae parcere cartae*: opportunity of speaking slipped by silence is as bad as importunity upheld by babbling....  
(Munda 132)

As a construction of her personal reputation, Munda's simultaneous use of learning and anger places her irresolvably at the cusp between the virile woman and the shrew, if not troubling her gender by seeming male through her extensive knowledge of Latin. Munda, as exemplified in this quote, tends to layer the rhetorical and logical significances of her quotes: here she justifies her breach of the feminine decorum of silence. She attacks the "babbling" that "provoked" her, and she documents her own learning. Where Anger's use of learning moves her tirade into deliberation, Munda's use of it illuminates the differences between herself and Swetnam's abilities and heightens the emotional force of her considered anger.

She retains this complex ethos throughout her work by balancing her angry tone with her skillful readings of both Swetnam and the classics. Her insults against Swetnam, as above, regularly undermine his arguments by referring to classical authors, and she focuses her comments on his style and

his citations. Usually she speaks generally, though she ends the pamphlet with a line-by-line assessment of his text, in which she excludes observations already made by Speght and Sowernam. Relatively rarely she agrees with Swetnam, and a few of her attacks on him are as single-minded as the following *ad hominum* attack:

We have your confession under your own hand, where you say you 'might have employed yourself to better use than in such an idle business'. True: (A fool speaks sometimes to the purpose). If you must needs be digiting your pen, the time had been far better spent if you had related to the world some stories of your travels with a gentleman learned and wiser than yourself. So you might have beguiled the time and exposed your ridiculous wit to laughter. (Munda 135)

By agreeing with him in order to disagree with him, she constructs herself as neither a shrew nor a virile woman, but as a believable personality who can consider both her own positions and her opponent's arguments. Similarly, by ranting while reading, she affirms her implied author's complex personality. This personality extends far past the stereotypes of women, and is more than even the two dimensional reputation that Sowernam and Anger construct for themselves. Munda presents us with an implied author who has a fully realized "self": she expresses a wide range of emotions--from honor and affection for her "mother," to these rants, to concern about the use of printing. These emotions are interwoven: for instance, she honors mothers in her respectful and affectionate dedication and in her defense of mothers against Swetnam's attack. Where the implied author seems fully developed, Swetnam is presented almost as the stereotype of the foolish and ignorant man. She finds his faulty logic more than just annoying, but downright funny: Swetnam attempt to use "bear-baiting" metaphor, which collapses ridiculously when he then denies

women--the bears--entry to the text/arena (Munda 142). Her critique of Swetnam makes him out as a stereotype, which highlights the complex personality of her own implied author, and it constructs Swetnam as no more than a one dimensional stereotype, which places him in the ethos position commonly reserved for women.

For the pamphleteers, their transactional readings, their thorough presentation of those readings as a style device, and the ethos of their implied authors are intertwined. To convince their audience that they speak as more than just the essentialized notion of the Woman, and to convince them that they speak as individual women, they write their ideas against both their opposition's texts and the stereotypes that could be expected of them. Even more significantly, Munda presents herself as a complex personality who has overlapping motives, desires, and emotions, which constructs her persona as more complex than even the personal reputation that Sovernam delineates for herself: Munda becomes as believable as an implied author as many of the men's implied authors, though with much more work to do it. Her careful use of style especially presents herself as more than her audience's expectations of her based on her sex. Her awareness of the cultural constraints on her ethos as derived from her ontological status, the reputation of the pamphlet form, and her use of shrewish ranting, virile transactional reading, and a plethora of complex personal characteristics shape the dynamic relationship between herself and her audience which presents her ethos appeal. For Munda in particular, ethos is dynamic because she does not limit herself to either a one dimensional stereotype of Woman as "good," as Speght does, or a two dimensional reputation, as being somewhat shrewish and somewhat virile, as Sovernam and Anger do. For Munda, her ethos functions as a bridge between her

complex personality and her audience's expectations of women, even though there is no evidence that her attempt to so cooperate with her audience in any way succeeded. For all of these women's attempts to present persuasive ethos appeals, these women's works fell into obscurity, failing against the endemic misogyny that they attempted to reject.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

The particular ethos problems exhibited by the writings of these early modern women indicate extremely marginalized, if not nearly silenced, speakers. Marginalized speakers, like these Renaissance women, are constrained by being ideologically predefined as unacceptable public speakers within their community. Unlike most members of the social or economic elite, marginalized speakers had to defend themselves against the audiences's stereotypes of them. These stereotypes, as in the case of Renaissance women, can dominate one's ethos, which effectively silences a speaker. The Renaissance women attempt to speak anyway by either ignoring the audience's expectations of them, as with Christine in the *querelle*, or by answering those stereotyping expectations, as in the *Cité* and the pamphlets.

For these women, ethos is a tripartite dynamic relationship among speech, speaker, and community; specifically it represents the influence of the audience's expectations, the speakers's personal reputations, and their styles. I use this definition of ethos throughout this dissertation, yet I discovered that even this breakdown of the ethos appeal is too limited, for it assumes that women had significant influence over their audience's expectations of them. I argue, then, that, for these women, the more effective ethos appeals dynamically connected them with their audience. The audience judged these women by the stereotypes about them, yet the women attempted to construct both their personal reputations and their style to present themselves as trustworthy, complex personalities, and so disprove those stereotypes. My



dissertation looks closely at two different, early debates about women in which women participated in order to explore in this notion of ethos. My intention has been to illuminate the ethos appeals available to these Renaissance women.

Christine's opponents, for instance, perceived her as incompetent, if not sinful. Those expectations directly reflected the stereotypes about women in the misogynistic courtly and clerkly literatures. Christine made a rhetorical mistake in the *querelle* when she failed to establish her ethos as other than the stereotype of a woman. By failing to undermine her audience's expectations of her, Christine allows her enemies to define her. Christine seems blind during the *querelle* to the nature of her ontological status as a woman, and, after that debate, in the *Cité des dames* and the *Trésor de la cité des dames*, she reconstructs women's ontological status and guides women in appropriating that new ontological status. Together, the two books promote women's use of persuasion--first by creating cultural spaces for women's speech and then by establishing a rhetoric for that speech. These later texts, I believe, respond to Christine's experience in the *querelle*, and they attempt to correct women's problematical ethos positions, as exhibited by the Cols's easy dismissals of Christine's arguments as merely the words of a woman. These three defenses of women--the defense of women against literary misogyny in the *querelle*, the recreation and defense of worthy women's ontological status in the *Cité*, and the defense of, and instructions in, women's speech in the *Trésor*--all indicate that women's ethos appeals are constructed in tandem with their communities.

The Renaissance Englishwomen's defenses of women exhibit similar ethos appeals, shaped by stereotype, reputation, and style. My study in the chapter of Renaissance expectations of women pamphleteers assesses the stereotypes that the discourse community held about women generally, and,

from that context, derives the audience's likely expectations of these female writers's ethos positions. Interestingly, three of the women challenge the conventional arguments concerning the "good" woman stereotype, and all of the women appropriate some of the stereotypically female of women's vices, which undermines the limitations on their ethos appeals as derived from conventional virtues. Generally, women writers, when not condemned outright, were seen as either the ontological type of the "virile woman" or as the "shrew," depending primarily on whether the speaker about the woman writer was being generous. The "shrew" and the "virile woman," though they connote distinct female types, actually delineated the same masculine skills of reasoning and speaking in a particular woman. The "virile woman's" speech was seen as potentially reasonable, and so as potentially persuasive. Yet appropriating the virile woman "type" as a speaking position was a dangerous solution to the audience's expectations of the unacceptability of the woman speaker, for such a woman speaker was easily seen as a shrew. Because women's best rhetorical ornament was defined as their silence, the audience's expectations was challenged by these women's very act of writing. By getting angry, these women show that the "shrew" position benefits the speaker because the shrew's words are less constrained than the "good" woman's words. Yet the "shrew" position, though more complex than the overarching notion of a "bad" woman, still limited these women's voices to the reputation expected of the "shrew."

In response to those stereotypes, the pamphleteers use the reputation of the pamphlet form to construct for themselves personal reputations that are more complex than mere stereotypes, and hence to construct for themselves ethos appeals that are not limited to the audience's culturally constructed expectations of them. To present a successful reputation, they needed to shape

it more than their audience's expectations shaped it: the pamphleteers did so, primarily, through their styles. These styles indicate the range of emotions expressed by these implied authors: highlighting, contrasting and elaborating on the personality traits and reputations created through the use of the pamphlet form. The angry, shrewish, excessive tone in these pamphlets is offset, to different degrees, by the skillful analyses and virile intelligence displayed in these women's close readings. The women pamphleteers use an efferent, transactional reading practice: they read the text in dialogue with it, focusing on the meanings they are left with from the text. They use this active reading process as a means of avoiding the trap of immasculation in their resistant readings. By ranting while reading, these women, especially Munda, affirm their implied author's complex personalities. These personalities extend their ethosappeals beyond the stereotypes of women as an attempt to develop their reputations. They present us with implied authors who are complex selves, instead of one dimensional Women. As such, the authors's ethos appeals become a dynamic relationship between the author and the audience, as both shape the character of the speaker.

In this study I have closely analyzed a particularly repressive rhetorical situation in order to develop a notion about the nature and function of ethos in such situations. The purpose of this dissertation has been, and remains, limited to the historical study of these women's ethos, hoping to see if the dynamics of the ethos appeal discovered through an analysis of Christine's work could be fruitfully used to analyze the works of women in a similar rhetorical situation. If any generalization is possible here, it may be that their ethos failed because their audience's expectations still successfully silenced them, despite their attempts to present themselves as reliable. Nevertheless, the possibilities for a

peroration to my study are deeply limited, for I have been *showing* what I discovered in my research, not arguing for a new theory. My primary conclusion is evinced by the dissertation's length: the analysis did prove fruitful for uncovering the significance of these women's rhetoric in their particular situations. I do not wish to too easily extrapolate my discoveries here into a theory of ethos. Certainly, this dissertation suggests the need for both further research in the various rhetorical situations that nearly silence a rhetor and for a theoretical analysis of that research once it is completed. One call for further research that I will hazard is a need to look at another, quite different, repressive rhetorical situation in order to see if a similar dynamic develops: for instance, a useful counterpoint to this study would be a study of first year college students who find themselves virtually silenced in the classroom. Only after completing a variety of such studies may it be reasonable to speculate about the theory of ethos suggested here.

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